



# History- Well Here's Mine

**Peter the Celt**

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# Man-The early years

## 1. Dolphin's Tale

Dol looked at the Sun setting beyond the green rolling hills with a mixture of awe and fear. "The Bringer of Light now sleeps and so must we." He turned to his brother Garh and said. "But I am not tired."

"Tis law," Garh said and started to make his way back to the complex, reluctantly Dol followed. He was different to the rest of them. They feared the dark yet he only hated it. To them it was death, to him it was the end of play and he did not want playtime to end.

"We ought to go to the Bringer of Light and ask him why he sleeps."

"Don't be silly," Garh laughed. "We are not birds and he is too high up to hear our shouts."

"We know where he sleeps," Dol said unperturbed. "It is just beyond the hills. We can wait for him and catch him maybe."

"Catch him," Garh said in surprise.

"Yes and then we can always have light, we won't need to sleep."

Garh could see the logic but his fear was pretty strong, "We will never find it in the dark and besides what about the demons?"

"We'll go when its light, we'll easily get there it is only behind the hills. There'll be no demons in the light."

"Well," Garh said going into thought, "It is only over the hills, yes we'll do it."

Dol never slept that night. His mind was in overdrive. How were they going to bring it back? How would they catch it for a start? He reasoned that it would be a ball of fire and as such would be too hot to hold. He had seen the devastation of fire for the shrub land around him was like a tinderbox and the hot summers days struck it with considerable regularity. Many a time he had fled the heat and come back to see its devastation. The Bringer of Light's children were merciless in their hunger and were to be feared as much as any demon. Doubt crept in with a slight sprinkling of fear, he was not big enough to be a hunter yet, what good would he be against the Bringer of Light? He had seen the damage that its children had done and thought how much worse their father must be. Fear subsided in time though along with thoughts of capturing it. He would just ask it to stay up a little longer so he could play more. He reasoned that as he did not need to sleep then neither would the Sun and with the advent of morning left it at that. Morning saw Dol and Garh sneaking off at first light. They headed towards the west while the Sun rose in the east reasoning that it would be more friendly at night as they were both usually quite grumpy in the morning and assumed it would be the same. The clan of Phin of which both Dol and Garh were members believed that the Sun travelled the world beneath them at night disturbing the demons that lived there and forcing them into the over-world to work their evil and generally misbehave. That was why it set in the west and rose in the east. Yes one man's philosophy is another man's bull shit but I digress. Time marched on and mid afternoon saw them clear of the hills and beyond their usual range of territory, a vast open prairie that went on as far as they could see lay before them. Garh was starting to get a little apprehensive at the thought of such a vast distance. "This can't be right you said it was just past the hills, there's no entrance here."

"There must be," Dol said and looked hard across the flat landscape, "Maybe it's further

on,” and they walked on until night started to fall. They were hot and tired and no further forward for the setting Sun seemed just as far away. They rested when it was too dark to continue and in the darkness they sat in fear enhanced greatly by the chorus of the night. “It’s miles away,” Garh said in almost a whisper but a loud growl interrupted him, “What was that?” he said in panic. “Me” A deep voice bellowed. They turned to see a large grizzly bear, “You have disturbed me from my slumber and I am not pleased.” “Sorry,” Dol said quickly “We did not know that you were here.” “No matter,” the bear said “So what’s miles away?” “We are looking for where the Bringer of Light starts his sleep,” Dol said. “Really,” the bear said “Whatever for?” “To ask him if he could stay up longer,” Dol said “So we can have more time to play.” “Mind if I come along,” the bear said “For I too would like to see the Bringer of Light.” The bear wanted to find out about fire for he wanted to master it to use it for his gain. “Sure,” Dol said and they all quickly fell to sleep. Dol’s journey to the Netherworld was uneventful and he woke up the next morning to set off again on his quest. The day was fairly easy for they rode on the back of the bear. Afternoon saw the approaching hills although it was not until nightfall that they actually arrived. The Sun had set behind the hills and so they thought that they would be there the next morning. “Tomorrow it is” said the bear, “And then I shall have fire.” “You want fire?” Dol said “Whatever for?” “To master it,” the bear said “Imagine what you could do with fire.” “You can never master the children of the Bringer of Light,” Garh said “They are unconquerable.” “Foolish man cub,” the bear said “Fire is not the Bringer of Light’s offspring. It is the Bringer of Light’s spell of destruction. If I knew it I could make my own.” “To what purpose?” Garh said. “To see at night,” the bear said “To keep me warm.” “Can it do that?” Dol said “So maybe if he gave us the spell he won’t need to stay up at night.” “True,” Garh said “Well we’ll find out tomorrow.” Next day quickly came and the afternoon saw them still in the hills. It was a hot Sunny day and the tinderbox was just about to be ignited. They were in a hollow full of dry wood when it happened. It took with such ferocity that Dol and Garh only just got out alive. It was a different story for the bear though for it found him trapped, surrounded by the Bringer of Light’s children” So you think you can master us,” the fire hissed” You think that we’ll bow down before you?” “No, no,” the bear said seeing its demise at hand “It was not me, it was the man cubs,” he got no further. From a safe place Dol and Garh watched in horror. Eventually Garh said, “I think we should go back.” “No,” Dol said “We’ve come this far, it must be close.” Nightfall came and they were still in the hills. They looked around them and much to their surprise saw light. It was a different colour to the light they normally saw but it was light nevertheless. They headed towards it and found a cave. In front of the cave was a great flame but unlike the fire that they usually saw it never spread. As they got closer they saw an old man tending it very carefully. They hid and watched with awe as the fire flickered throwing off light and heat in equal measure. As it danced and played it

entranced Dol and he found himself drifting in its direction.

“What do you want?” a snapping voice brought him back to reality. It was the old man’s and he was not too happy.

“You know the spell of the Bringer of Light?” Dol said.

“What” the man snapped.

“You can talk to the children of the Bringer of Light,” Dol said and then if inspired, “Are you the Bringer of Light?”

The old man laughed and said, “And what would you want with the Bringer of Light?”

“I want you to stop up longer so I can play more,” Dol said as Garh joined him.

The man laughed again so Dol said, “Or maybe I can have some of your offspring so I too may see at night.”

“What” the man said angrily, “How dare you. Do you think that I will give up my secret so easily? What do you have in exchange?”

“I have nothing,” Dol said and turned to go.

“One moment,” the man said and went quite for a while before saying, “Maybe you can help me.”

“I can?” Dol said turning back “How?”

“No,” the man said shaking his head, “It’s too dangerous. You are only children you would not stand a chance.”

“Tell us what must be done,” Dol said “And we’ll make that decision.”

“Come forward and watch the dance of the flame,” the man said and they duly obliged.

As the flames flickered pictures came to their mind. “Behold,” the man said as the scene played on. It was set in a great cavern well lit by firelight. In the middle was a cauldron guarded by a three headed monster that spat fire with every breath. “The entrance to the Netherworld. This is where I got the fire from. I am not the Bringer of Light; I stole the fire and so was cursed to live this solitary lifestyle. I want you to take the curse away from me.”

“Us,” Dol said “How?”

“By killing the three headed monster,” the man said, “For with its death the curse will be lifted.”

“It breathes fire,” Garh said, “What chance would we have against it?”

“It is a hard task I’ll admit,” the man said, “And you are but mere children but its reward is well worth the cost.”

“How can it be killed?” Dol said.

“By strength of mind,” the man said, “It will ask you three questions. Answer correctly and it will die, answer wrongly and,” he left it at that.

“That sounds dangerous,” Garh said “I’m not sure.”

“Well as I said,” the man said.

“One moment,” Dol said, “These questions, I don’t suppose you’d know what they were?”

“I know the first one,” the man said, “For I heard it when I was tending their fire.”

“Tending their fire?” Dol repeated.

“That is my curse,” the man said, “It is truly a ravenous creature. I must feed it constantly.”

“Why?” Garh asked.

“Its hunger is its life,” the man said, “It has an appetite for destruction that is insatiable, if

I stop feeding it though it quickly starves. When its life is over then so is mine, while the monsercat lives that is.”

“Monsercat,” Dol said interrupting him.

“The answer to the first question,” the man said, “The first head’s from a monkey, the second a serpent and the third a cat mon. ser. Cat.”

“Oh right,” Dol said and thought awhile before saying, “So this monsercat then, it must not be too far away.”

The man looked over at the cave entrance and said, “It lives there.”

Garh stepped back in horror but Dol was of sterner will. He marched straight in.

Reluctantly Garh followed for he had an uneasy feeling about the old man. As they disappeared into the darkness of the cave his inner sense came into fruition for the old man metamorphosed into a demon with pointed ears and a pointed chin. He cackled and disappeared into a puff of smoke.

Dol and Garh saw that the back of the great cavern, for that was what the cave became, was fire lit and could make out another entrance. They headed over towards it but were stopped from actually entering by a rat calling over to them.

“Don’t go in there,” it shrieked and ran over towards them, “It’s a bad evil place and many a man has entered but no one has ever left.”

“Have you ever entered?” Dol said.

“Many a time,” the rat said, “It is only human flesh that it eats.”

“The monsercat?” Dol said.

“How did you know its name?” the rat said.

It was told to me by the old man that stands guard,” Dol said” He said that it would be one of the questions it would ask us.”

“What man?” the rat said in surprise.

“Out there,” Dol said and walked back to the cave entrance, “He’s gone.”

“And so will you be if you had any sense,” the rat said.

“We’ve come this far,” Dol said.

“It’s your life,” the rat said and made to move off.

“Perhaps you might be able to help us?” Dol said stopping him.

“Me,” the rat said “Why would I want to do that?”

“No reason,” Dol said “Just to help a fellow traveller.”

“I would like to,” the rat said, “But I’m afraid if I do I will lose my home.”

“Sorry?” Dol said confused.

“You want fire,” the rat said, “The Great Masters of Wisdom have decreed that man cannot have fire, he will only get burned. If I help you I can no longer live in their world. Unless.” he stopped awhile before saying, “Unless you invite me to live in yours.”

“I shouldn’t think that will be a problem,” Dol said, “Yes, you are most welcome. Now will you help us?”

“Yes,” the rat said cheering, up “I will. I know one of the questions. I heard it when I was scurrying around. It cost someone his life so it came at a price.”

“Well it might save another,” Dol said.

“Fair enough,” the rat said, “The question was, what is my name?”

“Monsercat,” Dol said, “Are you sure that’s right, I thought it was the answer to the first question?”

“It might be,” the rat said, “But that’s not the answer to the second. The answer I heard

them say after he had failed was Absalom, the keeper of the flame.”

“Right,” Dol said, “Is there anything else that might help?”

“Well,” the rat said, “I’ve heard a few things but nothing about the last question,” the rat went on to relate what he knew and while this was happening Garh was having a hardening of heart. He reasoned that if he got the fire they would honour him and maybe make him king. He knew two of the questions already and they did not seem that hard. Leaving Dol and the rat he ran through the entrance before they had time to stop him.

“Let him go,” the rat said, “You can only approach them one at a time. I will sneak in and listen and then come back and tell you.”

Garh had entered the great cavern and was face to face with the creature.

“Ah,” the ape said, “Mortal meat, it has been a long time.”

“Not much of it though,” the cat said, “Hardly a bite each.”

“Child of man,” the snake said getting down to business, “What brings you to the cave of sorrows? Are you lost?”

“No,” Garh said with confidence, “I have come to be tested.”

“You,” the snake said in surprise, “I fear you are too young and unlearned.”

“That’s not really our choice to make,” the ape said as it was hungry, “It is decreed that all may try.”

“So all might die,” the cat said with a cackle.

“Very well,” the snake said and looking at Garh said, “I will ask you three questions. If you pass them you will be a great man for none before you have. Fail and you die.”

“And when I pass,” Garh said, “I get the fire, yes.”

“If,” the cat said with a laugh.

“Then tell me the first question,” Garh said.

“Fair enough,” the snake said, “Child of time, what am I?”

“You are a monsercat,” Garh said in a triumphal manner.

“What?” the cat said, its ears picking up, “How?”

“Don’t ask,” the snake said, “You’ll waste a question,” and then to Garh, “It seems you come well briefed, no matter. There are two more questions to go.”

“And the first of them?” Garh said with more than a hint of arrogance.

“Very well,” the serpent said “What is my name?”

“You are Absalom, the keeper of the flame,” Garh said with confidence. The ape shuddered at that but said nothing. “You come very well briefed,” the serpent said, “But I fear that’s as far as you’ll go.”

“I am prepared,” Garh said though this time he was uneasy.

“Why did I come to be?” the serpent said.

“Er,” Garh said and went quiet as he thought.

“You have no answer,” the cat said with more than a hint of relief.

“You know what will happen if you fail,” the ape said.

“Well,” the serpent said after a while, “Have you an answer?”

Garh just shook his head and looked at the floor.

“Very well,” the serpent said, “I came to be to protect the secret of fire. That is my life. If that secret is ever revealed I would have served my purpose and so be no more. You came close but now you are mine,” with lightening speed it grabbed Garh and plunged him into the boiling cauldron. It felt no pain as it held Garh under and no remorse while it ate him. As this was happening the rat told Dol the answer to the third question though it

never told him of Garh's demise. With his new found knowledge Dol walked in and much to his horror found the monsercat taking the last few bites and all that was left was charred bones.

"Not a lot really," the ape said not seeing Dol, "Hardly worth the trouble."

"Then you must still be hungry," Dol said trying to disguise the hatred it had for the creature.

"No," the serpent said sensing a trap, "We are sated."

"No matter," Dol said through clenched teeth, "I have come to be tested."

"We are full," the serpent said.

"What?" the ape said not sensing anything, "I was just getting the taste."

"Quiet," the snake said, "There's something wrong."

"Is it not decreed that all may try?" Dol said.

"You seem keen," the cat said and then to the snake, "It is right what he says."

"Then I fear our time is no more," the snake said quietly to itself before saying aloud,

"Very well, what am I?"

"You are a monsercat," Dol said.

"What is my name?" the snake said in a resigned tone.

"You are Absalon, the keeper of the flame."

"The last one will get him," the cat said.

"I fear not," the snake said, "We have a traitor in our midst. There is no way they should even have got the first question. They have been helped, I smell a rat." At that the rat came forward and said, "It is true."

"You know what will happen now," the snake said "You are now not part of the Grand Design."

"I will live in the land of man," the rat said "What do I care?"

"You vile creature," the cat said "Hear me now, my kind will hunt you down. We will kill you whenever and where-ever we see you. We will not eat you though. No, you are that disgusting that we cannot stomach you."

"I have no qualms about eating you," the snake said "But that is the only difference."

"I'll take my chance," the rat said.

"You mentioned a third question?" Dol said not wanting to get side tracked.

"Why did I come to be?" the snake said giving up.

"You came to be to protect the secret of fire," Dol said "That is your life; well that was your life."

"Very well," the snake said "We are lost," and went further to the back of the cavern

"See this sharp stone, do you know what it is?"

"Yes," Dol said "It is flint, the hunters use it to hunt."

"It also makes sparks when you strike it on this stone," and showed Dol a lump of iron peroxide. He struck the flint on the stone and a spark flew off.

"One of the Bringer of Light's children," Dol said "Is that what creates them?"

"Yes," the snake said "But like any child it needs to be nurtured and fed so it might grow." It made a pile out of some twigs and said, "That is what it feeds on but it needs to be nurtured first." It took out some tinder that Dol recognised as fungus and putting it next to the stone hit it with the flint once more. It blew gently on the tinder when the first spark caught it and soon it was fully ignited. It put the tinder in with the twigs and very soon there was a roaring fire.



“That’s amazing,” Dol said.

“Your turn now,” the snake said, “So I know that the secret is fully uncovered.”

Dol did as the monsercat had done and soon he had it mastered.

“I fear you have a mixed blessing,” the monsercat said and combusted from within.

“Am I not of my word,” the rat said “And now I can live in your world.”

“That maybe so but you will be reviled and hated for it.”

“What? But what about our deal?”

“You never told me about my brother’s death. I might have been able to have helped him.”

“What good would you have done? Foolish child.”

“You never gave me the chance to find out.”

“You never know when you are well off that’s your trouble. I will come and live in your world for now my world is closed to me. I have helped you and yet you throw it in my face. For that I revile you and vow that I will steal your food and spoil what I cannot eat. You will rue the day that you insulted me .You have cursed me to a life of shame and for that I will never forgive you” the rat ran off leaving Dol alone with his thoughts.

All this was being closely watched in another dimension devoid of time and space. Eight men sat around a table, each one a law unto themselves, the Masters of Wisdom. Etop and his seven sons, set in place to uphold the Earth Mothers laws. I had better elaborate a little more so you might get a deeper understanding. Etop (or evolve to ones purpose) was created so that Creation might just do that. He is the spur to this evolution. He decides what secrets man is ready to hear and when he is ready to hear them. He has to uphold the balance so that man might evolve in unity. His seven sons are called Siscail (survive in social climate around it) Sihail (survive in habitat around it) Sicail (survive in climate around it) Aam (attract a mate) Gobcos (give offspring best chance of survival) Dah (defend and hunt) and Finites (find its niche in the eco system) each one of these had their own interest to serve and so they were often in conflict.

“I don’t like it,” Sihail said “With fire they will do more than just survive, they will excel.”

“I agree,” Sicail said “They will no longer have to migrate; we will lose our control over them.”

“Maybe it’s time,” Etop said “After all they are destined to grow, what say you Gobcos?”

“I can see good coming out of it,” Gobcos said “For their children I mean. They need not die of the cold.”

“Dah?” Etop said.

“I can see it as a hunting aid,” Dah said “Though I fear they are not ready for it.”

“Fair point,” Etop said “Siscail?”

“Abstain,” Siscail said “I can’t see how it concerns me.”

“Aam?” Etop said.

“No concern,” Aam said.

“Finites?”

“I would say it was for the best,” Finites said “But I don’t think it concerns me.”

“Two for two against and three undecided,” Etop said “Looks like its new business.”

“Too late now,” Aam said “The deed has been done.”

“Not as simple as that,” Etop said “There may be retribution to be paid.”

“My apologies,” Aam said and bowed his head.

“He came with good intent,” Dah said “His one motive was to be able to play a little longer.”

“That works in his favour,” Aam said “But it is the effects of his action that should concern us.”

“It has already started,” Etop said “He has upset the balance and caused ill will between animals.”

“That was the fault of the rat,” Siscail said “There is no blood on this child’s hands.”

“Maybe not directly,” Etop said “But I see a punishment is in order.”

“He is innocent,” Siscail said “The only reason I could see would be revenge. He has lost a brother, is that not punishment enough?”

“Now Siscail,” Etop said “You know that revenge is not in my nature. I have to uphold Creation’s balance that’s all. I believe that he must have consorted with a demon. How else would he know the first question.” (The Masters of Wisdoms’ powers only worked in the cave itself for their range of power diminished at night)

“Why would a demon do that?” Aam said “And does it not prove that fire is a bad thing for man to have.”

“It would seem that the demons think so,” Etop said “I would say the child has some guilt on his hands.”

“Child,” Siscail said “You said it yourself. How can you punish a child?”

“He will not always be a child,” Etop said “But what I will say is that if he can do this as a child what sort of man will he become.”

“Then hold judgement,” Siscail said “Let us see how he develops.”

“Sounds fair,” Etop said and looking around the table “Are we all agreed?”

The nodding heads confirmed it.

“I think we’ll be keeping a close eye on this one,” Etop said.

## **Chapter 2**

Dol looked around the cave after the rat had run off, his eyes lit upon the remains of his brother and it sickened him.

“You have freed me from my curse,” a voice said from behind him “But I fear it has cost you your brother.”

“A price too high to pay, I only wanted to stay out a little longer.”

“You can do much more than that. Keep warm at night, it has no end of uses,” and walked over to the cauldron. “Cook food, clear forests. It is a major step forward,” The man saw that he was having no effect so he said “One day you will understand,” and much to Dol’s horror disappeared. Dol looked at the space where the man had once been and then quickly gathered the stones and tinder and ran out of the cave into the now daylight. He ran for about a mile and then had to stop for he was out of breath. He had seen a demon; there was no doubt in his mind. Did that mean that he had been tricked in some way? Maybe he was not supposed to have it. No, he quickly dismissed that. He had answered all the questions and lost a brother in the process. He had earned it and so was meant to have it. It was his, if not by right by wrong but it was his nevertheless. He was interrupted at that by a large magpie that flew in and landed beside him. It studied him through cold death eyes for a few seconds before saying, “You have the secret of fire?”

“That’s right,” Dol said without fear.

“I want it. Will you give it to me?”

"It cost me a brother. Do you think it's that easy?"

"I'll take my chances. It is well worth the price."

"Not to me it isn't."

"Then you refuse."

"It's for the best. I would not like to say what could happen."

"Then you have made an enemy. I am a good thief as you will soon find out," and flew off.

Dol did not take the threat too seriously as he reasoned it was only a bird. He got up and began his long trek home unaware that he was being watched in a distant dimension.

"See," Aam said "More unrest. This child could be quite a liability."

"It is the magpie's greed," Siscail said, "The child is not to blame."

"You give to one you have to give to all," Sihai said "It is only fair."

"The magpie is not equipped to use fire," Etop said "It is not part of the great plan. It is jealousy, no more."

"That was to happen anyway," Siscail said "Whoever found the secret would get the same treatment It is not the child's fault that the other animals are jealous of man and his favoured status."

"True," Etop said and they said no more. Dol journeyed for the rest of the day without further trouble and close to night fall he reached the end of the hills. The vast prairie lay before him and it looked quite a daunting prospect. He decided to rest there that night and start again at first light next morning. He lit a fire and sat near it to keep warm. It was not long before he had a visitor.

"You must know the secret of fire," it was a rabbit and it stood in awe, "May I stay awhile, it seems to give off a warming sensation."

"Sure," Dol said, "You are most welcome."

The rabbit sat at a safe distance away and Dol carried on looking into the fire He had no desire to eat the rabbit as he hated the taste of raw meat. He had tried it once, secretly for only the hunters were allowed to have it (An initiation into adulthood that he was dreading) and the blood filled fatty fleshed meat made him physically sick. He was happy with fruit and nuts so the rabbit was pretty safe. As he watched the flame flicker it soothed him and he fell quickly to sleep.

On entering the Netherworld he came across a familiar face, it was the old man,

"Welcome Dol," he said "What do you think of my new environment?"

"Who are you?"

"It matters little. What does matter is that you have released me and so I am beholden to you."

"You gave me fire."

"No. You did that yourself. But as I've said I am beholden to you. You have underestimated the potential of fire. Food for example, I hear that you hate the taste of meat. Try it cooked, it might surprise you."

"Well there is the rabbit I suppose. I can't see him wanting to be burned though."

"It is done. While you are sleeping he went to steal some fire but it stole him instead"

"What? How do you know this?"

The old man smiled and disappeared.

Dol awoke to find it as the man said it would be. The fire had gone out although the meat was cooked and still warm. Reluctantly he tried it and much to his surprise he liked it.

Quickly he ate it and sat awhile to let it settle. He thought about the old man and thought that he actually must be the Bringer of Light. To anyone not of the clan Phin that might sound illogical but to Dol it was perfectly obvious. The clan believed that when you slept part of you entered the Netherworld for this is where your dreams came from. Now the Netherworld was the domain of the Bringer of Light at night that was why dreams were set in daylight and further proof being that it rose and set in different places. Yes pretty obvious when you think about it from the clan Phins' point of view and as Dol was of that mind set it could only mean one thing. The old man was the Sun personified; he was the Bringer of Light. Through him he got fire. He had said that he was cursed by the fire when in reality fire must be his curse, his spell of destruction. He got up and started his long trek unaware he was being watched by two sets of interested parties.

“Cooking food now,” Dah said.

“Another accident,” Siscail said “Brought about by the rabbits greed.”

“No fault of the child again,” Etop said, “He’s either cursed or blessed I’m not sure which.”

“I see trouble ahead,” Aam said “It seems the magpie has found two friends.”

Behind a large rock the magpie studied Dol as he started off on his journey home. He was not alone though for with him were two wolves.

“See him, filthy man cub,” the magpie said, “Strutting around knowing how to make fire. He wants putting in his place.”

“Too right,” the large brown wolf to his left said, “He might know it but I’m willing to wager that no other man does.”

“So with his death they will lose the secret,” the magpie said.

“I don’t know about that,” the black wolf to the magpies right said, “If we kill the child then his family will come after us.”

“They’ll never know,” the magpie said “They’ll never find him for a start.”

“Yes,” the brown wolf said, “We’re miles from the man pack. Why should they have fire anyway, they seem to have everything that’s good.”

Back at the Masters the recent turn of events left a very mixed reaction.

“More distrust,” Dah said “He hasn’t even had the secret a day.”

“And he won’t have it much longer,” Aam said, “So maybe the problem will just go.”

“But what if he was meant to have it,” Sihai said, “We’d be going against the Grand Design.”

“Not us,” Dah said, “It will not be blood on our hands.”

“Maybe,” Sihai said, “But if it’s meant to be is it not for us to protect him.”

“No,” Dah said “If it’s meant to be then it means he’s ready for it and so he’s ready to defend it.”

“He’s a child,” Sihai said “What good will he do against two wolves?”

“True,” Etop said and went deep into thought. He was in a bit of a quandary because if man was supposed to have it, it was his job to give Dol protection. After a while he said “I will tame one of the wolves to reduce the odds but until I’m sure that he’s supposed to have it I can’t really do a lot.”

“First fire, then cooked food and now domesticating animals,” Dah said “He’s evolving too quickly.”

“Only small leaps really,” Etop said “Natural developments from fire.”

Dol was aware of none of this as he made his long journey across the plain. He had an

uneasy feeling that he was being followed but never saw anything to confirm it. As night-time fell he was still on the prairie. He lit a fire and took in its warmth. It was not long before he had company though. The magpie flew in and landed just out of Dol's reach "So man child," it said "Have you had a change of heart?"

"No," Dol said defiantly "It came at too high a price."

"Then if I can't have it neither can you," the magpie said and the two wolves made their way forward out of the darkness. Dol saw his predicament and it filled him with fear. He was no match for two wolves, even as a man he would not be. He would have to think fast and use some guile, "What good is fire to you? You are not equipped to use it. You need hands to make it not wings."

"I see the truth in what he says," the black wolf said, "We cannot make fire."

"Why should man have it?" the magpie said, "He gets everything."

"I cannot fly," Dol said "Surely that is a greater gift than fire?"

"Yes," the black wolf said starting to look at Dol in a new light, "Fire's not such a big thing."

"Well it's a meal at the end of the day," the brown wolf said.

"Ah that's it," Dol said as if by inspiration. "It's not about fire, the magpie is hungry and wants you to kill me for him."

"What?" the black wolf said and looked at the magpie suspiciously.

"No," the magpie said backing off slightly.

"It must be," Dol said, "He has no use for fire; he can't make it so it's no good to him."

"Maybe," the brown wolf said, "But why should you have it?"

"You are welcome to share it," Dol said, "You can take warmth from it on a cold night."

"I never feel the cold," the brown wolf said with contempt "It is hunger I feel now," and came towards Dol in a menacing manner.

"Wait a moment," the black wolf said, "I am not the magpies fool; this man has offered to share it with us."

"He refused me," the magpie said, "He's only talking out of fear."

"I said that I would not give you the secret of fire," Dol said, "It cost me my brother. You are most welcome to share in its warmth though."

"Splitting hairs," the brown wolf said and came forward once more.

"Enough," the black wolf said.

"Are you taking his side against mine?" the brown wolf said, "Are you going against your kin?"

"If need be," the black wolf said, "You're in the wrong, the magpie has fooled you. We kill him and we have to put up with the consequences not him."

"We are wolves," the brown wolf said, "That's how we live."

"We're nobody's fool," the black wolf said, "The child goes free."

"Then you are no longer my kin," the brown wolf said and made his way back into the darkness. On seeing this, the magpie thought it prudent to fly off leaving Dol alone with the wolf.

"It seems that I too have lost a brother," the wolf said after they had gone, "It might have been the right thing to do but now I am without a family."

"Then you can join mine to replace the brother that I have lost."

"Do you mean that?"

"Most certainly, you have proved a good friend to a stranger. It would be an honour to

count you amongst my kin.”

“Then I will protect and serve you. My name is Canine.”

“I am Dol of the clan Phin. We shall have such fun together. Just like me and Garh,” a tinge of sadness entered his voice at that.

“You must sleep now. I will stand guard in case Lupine comes back.”

Dol quickly entered the Netherworld and found the old man waiting for him. “Did you taste the difference?” he said on seeing Dol.

“Yes. It did taste better.”

“And your new brother?”

“You did that?”

“No. That was Etop, one of the Masters of Wisdom.”

“Sorry?”

“They control your evolutionary path.”

“Oh right,” Dol said not understanding.

“You have grown enough to take responsibility for another animal. Quite a step really.”

“Me, look after him. Surely you mean the other way?”

“That too, he has come to you as an equal, never forget that. You will look after him and he will do the same for you. He will hunt with and for you, he will guard you and your territory for it is also his. He will be loyal beyond question and as good a companion as you’ll ever meet. You in turn will give him shelter and treat him like one of your kin, let him lie by the fire and give him meat cooked from that same fire.”

“Right, that sounds fair enough.”

“Do not underestimate the importance of giving him cooked meat. Feed him raw and the animal side of him will take over once again. Anyway, your journey is about to résumé,” and Dol woke up to find daylight and a couple of rabbits dead on the floor.

“I thought you might be hungry,” Canine said. The fire was nearly out so Dol fed it up once more then skinned the rabbits with the piece of flint he had. He did not put the rabbits in the fire itself but slightly above it. This was more so he would not get his fingers burned than anything else. The rabbits soon cooked and he gave one to the wolf who quickly devoured it. “I have never tasted better,” Canine said after he had finished, “Not even at my most hungriest. From now on I will not be able to eat meat that has not been blessed by fire, it has no taste.”

“I must admit it does taste good.”

“And to think that if the magpie had, had its way we would never have found out. I fear Lupine is a fool who does not know when he is well off.”

“The magpies a devious creature, it is not your brother’s fault.”

“He’s not my brother. Who wants to have a brother that’s a fool? No, I would say that fire is destined to be and only a fool goes against destiny.”

“You’re my brother now,” Dol said trying to console him, “I hope that I don’t prove to be a fool.”

“Never,” Canine said and then changing the subject slightly, “So this brother that you lost, what happened?” Dol went on to relate the tale and after he had finished Canine said “He sounds just like Lupine.”

“I suppose he was in a way. Quite selfish at times,” and after a moments thought, “Maybe it was for the best then. Destiny and all that. Anyway I have a new brother now.”

“My thoughts exactly,” Canine said and they started off on the next leg of the journey.

They talked away as they crossed the prairie and the time passed fairly quickly. They did not realise that they were being tailed at a distance by the magpie but it would not have made much difference if they had of done. It had a lot on its mind. It did not want man to have fire but it knew that it would have little chance of stopping him, especially now as he had a wolf as a friend and protector. It flew along at a safe distance just hoping to do mischief when it could and just wait for the opportunity but in a vast open place like the prairie there was very little chance of that.

In a dimension far away though it had found a new ally.

“In the interest of balance,” Dah said “Shouldn’t we now give something to the magpie?”

“What?” Etop said in surprise.

“It has to balance,” Aam said “Isn’t that what Creation is all about?”

“Well I don’t know,” Etop said slightly flustered, “I mean what would you give it for a start? We can only give him what he’s equipped to handle.”

“It can evolve no further physically,” Sihai said coming to Etop’s aid.

“Then it must be mentally,” Dah said.

“Is that wise?” Sihai said “I mean it’s not really our jurisdiction for a start. Anyway everything must evolve at its own pace without help or hindrance. Is that not set in stone?”

“But the child was helped,” Aam said “He would never have got the answers otherwise, a precedence has been set and out of balance we must set another one.”

“It must be so,” Dah said.

“Alright,” Etop said on seeing he had no alternative, “But we can only work within our boundaries, we cannot really give it anything new.”

“Then what’s the point?” Dah said interrupting him.

“Allow me to finish,” Etop said and continued, “We cannot give it anything new because it will not be equipped to handle it. The only thing we can really do is to give it more guile. We’ll enhance its animal cunning.”

“I apologise,” Dah said “You are definitely a good judge for was he not beaten by guile?”

“It will even things up and return the balance,” Etop said and the magpie got more guile. Quite handy really for as the magpie landed to rest and let the two get some more distance between them it came up with the beginnings of a cunning plan. It started to think that maybe it was looking at things slightly wrongly. Sure man had fire, it was too late to stop him but it could still do Dol harm. Yes, let him come home the great hero and then the politics of envy could begin. It would fly ahead and start sowing the seeds of discord. It reasoned that it would be next afternoon before they arrived back. “That’s plenty of time,” it said aloud and flew off.

Late afternoon saw Dol and Canine at the foothold of the hills, with the prairie behind them. He knew the journey would soon be over.

“Not long now,” Dol said “Though it won’t be tonight.”

“It’s getting dark already. What say we stay here the night.”

“It would be best I suppose. We would still be home late morning. Yes, why not?”

Dol made another fire (He was getting quite proficient in it so it quickly lit) and they rested and talked awhile. “So you’ll be a man of note when you go back,” Canine said.

“Me,” Dol said for he had never thought about it before.

“Yes, you’ve got the secret of fire, you’re a hero.”

“I never really thought about it before. Is that a good thing?”

“Well generally. Some might get jealous but that’s up to them.”

“Why should that be?”

“They’ll fear you.”

“Me,” Dol said with a laugh “I can’t really see that happening.”

“Your popularity, you’ll tell your story a thousand times and still you will have an audience. Believe me Dol that will ignite a lot of jealousy.”

“Why though?”

“You’ve done more as a child than any hunter. None of them with all their experience and adventure could even come close to what you’ve done. Their stories now are nothing and with them goes their honour.”

“Oh. I never thought about that.”

“Maybe they won’t think like that. I was just saying that they might.”

“No. There is truth in your words. And my father Sel, he might not be too pleased.”

“Your father?” Canine repeated.

“He is the king and Garh his first born.”

If Sel’s ears were not burning at that it was only because they were being battered by the magpie. It had flown over to him late afternoon and much to its surprise Sel had actually called to it.

“You travel far and wide; you might be able to help me.”

“Well I’ll try my best,” the magpie said not really guessing what he wanted.

“Have you seen two of our kind on your travels it appears I have lost my two sons?”

“I have not seen two of your kind only one. I spoke to him and he told me that he and a wolf he had befriended had killed his brother.”

“What? When was that?”

“Not long ago though I don’t know when the deed was done as they had no body with them.”

“And where are they now?”

“Just beyond the hills I would say, they should be here by the afternoon.”

“Why would they do that, come home I mean?”

“Trick you perhaps; I’m not sure that I know. Only you know the child concerned”

“But which one? What did the child look like?”

“I could do better than that I could give you his name. I overheard him talking to the wolf.”

“Well,” Sel said impatiently.

“He called himself Dol.”

“Dol,” Sel said in disgust and this did not go unnoticed by the magpie, “I always knew he envied Garh.”

“Well I don’t know about that, have you other sons?”

“No, just the twins.”

“Ah, and you think that he has killed his brother so he might one day be king.”

“Over my dead body,” Sel said angrily “He will stand trial for his deeds.”

“That might be a little tricky. You see he’s got the secret of fire with him.”

“What?” Sel said in surprise, “It’s a joke, no man has the secret of fire.”

“I’ve seen him make it myself. Now I don’t know how he’s got it but I know he’s got it.”

“Garh must have got it that would be the reason that he was killed.”

“Well as I say I don’t know how he got it and I don’t know what sort of person he is but



I'm guessing with the secret of fire he's going to be popular and hard to accuse."

"I think you are right."

"Time will bring opportunity I would suggest caution for the time being."

"Maybe you're right, let him have his glory for a while but mark my words, he will never get to manhood."

"Well it is not for me to interfere in the matters of man, I'm just glad I've been of service."

"And you shall be amply rewarded, anything that you want, if I can I will give it you."

"Well reward is not my aim I only want to see that justice is done."

"Very noble but I am now obligated to you and as a matter of honour I fulfil my obligations."

"I know little of the matters of man I must admit so I will not insult you from my ignorance. Maybe there is something you can do for me?"

"Anything, if it's in my power."

"I, too would like the secret of fire."

"When I find it, it will be yours."

"Then you are truly a noble man and maybe if you are of the same mind we might be allies. You might find me quite useful to your purpose."

"We'll see," Sel said and the magpie flew off.

All this was being watched in horror in another dimension.

"That was a bad mistake," Sicai said "I fear we have unleashed a monster."

"It could upset the balance quite dramatically," Sihai said.

"It is done now," Etop said, "We'll give things time to find their level and then reassess the situation once more."

"That might be dangerous," Sicai said, "Who knows what damage that magpie might be capable of. Given time he could be a major problem. We must do something now, not leave it to later."

"We can do nothing until things have had time to settle" Etop said "Let the muddy waters clear and we can see things better."

"And the damage it might do?" Sicai said.

"There is nothing we can do at present," Etop said "The magpie will have to keep."

"And the child's father? Aam said.

"The secret of fire has been delivered," Etop said, "Well it will be tomorrow. Once done our protection is finished and it's up to the child I'm afraid. He's caused enough trouble as it is."

"True," Aam said, "Though I think he might be worth keeping an eye on."

"Don't worry about that," Etop said "He has not been judged over his consorting with a demon yet. We'll be keeping a close eye on him for quite a while.

### **Chapter 3**

Dol entered the Netherworld after he had fell to sleep and soon found himself face to face with the old man. "And home comes the hero," he said with a smile.

"I hope my father thinks that way for fire is indeed a mixed blessing."

"You have a wise friend and a treacherous enemy."

"My father?"

"In time but I was thinking more of the magpie."

“The magpie I shouldn’t think that it would be able to do me much harm.”

“Don’t underestimate it, it has already spoken with your father and told him that you have killed Garh.”

“What? And he believed it?”

“Yes.”

“He always has had a low opinion of me.”

“You’ll be safe for the time being but I must warn you that he has vowed to kill you before you come of age.”

“Two Moons that’s not a long time.”

“Maybe not but the secret of fire should keep you alive for a while. He dare not move straight away for you will be a popular person but mark my words when the fuss has died down he’ll make his move.”

“Then I am lost what good would I be against him?”

“You have a wise and loyal friend he’s more than a match for your father. Keep him close and you’ll have no fear.”

“And my father, do you think I could get him to believe the truth about Garh?”

“You would be a better judge of that would he take your word over the magpies?”

“I’m not sure, he favoured Garh to such an extent that I never really got a look in. His death is going to be a major loss to him and I can see him blinded by rage. That magpie has made the situation a lot worse I can tell you.”

“Tell him the truth that’s all you can do. Oh, and sleep with one eye open,” and disappeared.

Dol woke up to a bright new day. Canine was already up and waiting.

“A few hours should do it,” Dol said “and then you shall see your new family.”

Canine got nervous at that and said, “What if they don’t accept me?”

“Why ever not?”

“I am a wolf we are natural competitors to you. There will be a lot of mistrust.”

“I did not realise, do you think I ought to ask them before I introduce you?”

“I will hide if they refuse you then I will disappear.”

“No, if they refuse you I will leave with you.”

“You must not do that it is bad enough that I have lost my family. No, I will make my own path.”

Dol could see that the wolf was adamant so he said, “I’m sure they will accept you. Don’t forget that we come with the secret of fire and without your help they would not have it.”

“Well there is that,” Canine said picking up, “Yes, I think you are right. I will hide and you can call me. Don’t shout my name though for anyone who hears it can then control me.”

“Oh,” Dol said in surprise, “I never knew that.”

“Yes,” Canine said as they both started to make their way on the final leg of the journey, “Quite an interesting story if you have a mind to hear it.”

“Why not it should make for a pleasant walk I think.”

“Good,” Canine said and began, “The story begins at the beginning of things when the Grand Design was being first formulated.”

“What is that anyway I think the rat mentioned it.”

“The Grand Design is everything; well more precisely it is the purpose behind everything. It is the evolution of Creation as it strives for perfection. It is the interaction

between animals and plants to find their balance and make Creation come to life. Everything has a place in the Grand Design for it was created that way. Everything was created to uphold a purpose, one little part of the Grand Design, the wolf to cull the old and feeble the rabbit to keep the vegetation down. We all do our bit to keep the whole thing running as we evolve generation by generation to achieve our purpose and that purpose is to find our niche in the eco system.”

“And man?”

“Ah, back to my story then. Man is the most privileged of all the animals, he is the tender of the land. When he was chosen for the role though it caused a lot of friction amongst the other animal spirits. The wolf spirit was one of the most vocal for it perceived itself to be just as strong. It could have been quite an enemy so the Masters in their infinite wisdom put in a spell to balance the situation. If a man ever finds out a wolf’s name then that wolf comes under his control.”

“I never knew.”

“Anyone else finds my name I will fall under their control. Be careful who you tell it to”

“I will tell it no one, well not without your consent anyway. But how will I call you then?”

“Make a noise like the wind in your mouth and then blow,” Dol did this and much to his surprise he whistled. “See how loud it can become,” Canine said and so Dol blew harder. “There,” Canine said, “When you do that I will know that you want me and so come immediately.”

“Alright, you mentioned the Masters earlier. Would that be the Masters of Wisdom?”

“That’s right.”

“I think the rat might have mentioned them. Who are they and what purpose do they serve?”

“They are the upholders of the divine plan, each one is a natural law personified by the Creative Force. They guide and shape our evolution.”

“Powerful people then.”

More ears were burning although in another dimension.

“Some secrets are sacred,” Etop said “Not for mortal minds.”

“That boy knows too much already,” Aam said “No man should know too much for it upsets the balance.”

“It is only a child’s curiosity,” Sihai said “He did not do it for personal gain.”

“It’s not the cause I’m worried about,” Etop said “It’s the effect.”

“Yes,” Aam said “And what else the wolf might reveal.”

“He knows no other,” Sicai said, “For that was all I told him.”

“What?” Etop said, “You told him?”

“Yes,” Sicai said, “He needed to know.”

“Never,” Etop said, “There is no reason for him needing to know that.”

“Balance,” Sicai said, “To compensate for him losing some of his animal cunning when he left his family. I told him that to give him a vestige of intelligence.”

“You should have informed me,” Etop said.

“It is not really your jurisdiction,” Sicai said.

“Maybe not,” Etop said, “But I need to know to keep a grasp on the big picture.”

“I understand,” Sicai said, “I just did not think it important. It was only a little knowledge to give his mind something to hook on.”

“If that’s all he knows we’re safe,” Etop said, “No damage can be done.”

Dol and Canine got to the complex by late morning. Canine hid and told Dol to wait for the right moment for it was quite a major thing. He would wait however long it took.

It was with very mixed feelings that Dol entered the complex. It was a set of caves that the clan of Phin had occupied for generations. Unlike future clans they were not nomadic. They did not need to be for they had everything at hand, they had no harsh winters to drive them out just a warm temperate climate. Fruit and nuts were their main diet and they were happy with that. The eating of meat was more for ritual purposes as the clan of Phin believed in it more as a rite of passage. Yes it was an invariable Eden.

“Where have you been?” he was greeted by Calp on his entrance, “Sel has been worried sick.”

“I must see him; do you know where he is?”

“Sure, follow me,” and Dol obeyed. Dol saw his father and told him that Garh had died. He knew that he already knew so he was just going through the motions. Sel in turn pretended to be ignorant and seemed pleased he had returned leading Dol to think that maybe the old man had got it wrong. He next told him that he had brought back the secret of fire. This caused an uproar of laughter amongst the gathered clan members which was only pacified when he actually showed them. The clan of Phin now had light at night and so Dol was a hero. The hatred grew inside Sel as he watched them congratulate Dol. His mind was bitter thinking about how it should have been Garh as he was the one that really got it. He knew that it would not be long before he killed Dol. He could not control his temper for that long. As they sat up long into the night for fire now lit their path he looked slyly at Dol as he regaled them on the wonders of fire. When Dol got to cooked meat though his temper just ignited. “You dare to eat meat,” he snapped “That is the domain of the hunter.”

“I would say that he has earned the right,” Calp said coming to Dol’s aid, “He has done what no man has done before him.”

“Yes,” and “Well said,” echoed around the large cave. Sel saw that he was in the minority. The magpie was right, he was too popular now. He went quiet at that and Dol continued. The conversation dwindled to nothing not long after and they all retired to sleep. Calp had sensed Sel’s manner towards Dol and put it down to jealousy. He vowed to keep an eye on the situation for although he was the clan’s champion and the king’s natural protector he reasoned that Dol would be king one day. He had also reasoned that if Dol could do what he had done as a child as a man he would be capable of great things, a much better king than Sel who had no sense of adventure and never went out of the valley. All this went unaware by Dol as he fell to sleep with a good feeling of being wanted. He met the man in the Netherworld who had in mind a little instruction.

“See this,” he said as he passed Dol a spear, “One of yours I believe?”

Dol held it and checked it and said, “That’s right.” It was a shaft of wood with a piece of sharpened flint tied to it with twine.

“Not very stable,” the man said, “The head soon comes loose,” and pulled the head back and forward and it soon moved with ease.

“Now look at this one,” he said and showed Dol another spear. It was of a different design. The top of the wood had been split and the flint inserted inside it. He saw that it was still wrapped in twine although there was something different about it. It had a hard clear shell around it. “Much superior isn’t it?”

“Yes a lot better. What is that stuff wrapped around the twine though?”

“Glue you get it from the kutu tree,” with that a kutu tree appeared.

“How did that happen?”

“The Netherworld works differently to the over-world, thought forms its own reality. I just think about it and it appears.” He cut a V shape tray in the bark and soon the sap started to flow. He collected it into a stone drinking cup and held it over a newly appeared fire. Soon the sap thinned into liquid more akin to water. He poured it around the spear and said, “It’s as easy as that.”

“That’s amazing thank you.”

“All part of fire’s versatility, your clan should be happy with that.”

“Yes and you know I think my father’s getting to quite like me now.”

“I wouldn’t be too sure about that he still has designs on your life.”

“I’ll bare that in mind,” Dol said and found himself back in the over-world. He sneaked out first light and quickly found Canine who was interested to hear of any developments. Dol brought him up to date and told him that he had not had the opportunity to mention Canine yet but it would not be too long before he did. Dol promised to come back later and went back before he was missed. He spent the rest of the morning showing the clan the secret of fire and making sure that everyone had mastered it. While all this was happening Sel was getting reacquainted with the magpie

“Look at him strutting around,” the magpie said, “He’s quite the man now.”

“And all at Garh’s expense,” Sel said in a bitter tone, “Let him enjoy it while he can.”

“Times on your side though not as much as you think I fear.”

“Why’s that?” Sel said in surprise.

“I would say that they would want to make him king soon. See how they treat him now, they almost worship him.” Sel was taking it all on board and his bitterness was growing accordingly. “Yes he’s quite the man now,” the magpie said and this time the seed caught for it gave Sel the germ of an idea.

“When he goes on his quest for adulthood I will have him,” Sel said. Now to anyone reading this who is not from the clan Phin I had better explain the quest for adulthood. When the child reaches the age of thirteen he goes into the wilderness to hunt an animal. Any animal for it is the act of killing itself that is the thing. It showed that he was a man and thus had mastery over the other animals. The eating of the flesh was just to emphasise the point and test the stomach of the hunter.

“Any day now,” the magpie said.

“A couple of Moons then he comes of age. If I can hold out that long that is.”

“It need not be that long they see him much a man already. It would just be a formality, maybe a reward for finding the secret of fire. It would show you were a gracious king and should he come to harm it would not reflect on you, a wolf maybe?”

“You said that he was with a wolf it never came with him.”

“Maybe they were only sharing the journey I’m not sure. He was not the wolf I had in mind though.”

“I don’t need a wolf anyway besides it’s a matter of personal honour for he killed my son.”

“My apologies it is not for me to interfere in the matters of man.”

“You have done me a good service I wouldn’t call that interfering. No, you have proved a good friend and after I have killed Dol tomorrow you will be amply rewarded.”

“Fire is reward enough for me,” the magpie said and flew off. It went straight to Lupine for it wanted to make sure. It found Lupine on the other side of the hills and flew down to talk to him.

“I bring news of Dol and your treacherous brother if you have a mind to hear it,” the magpie said as it made itself comfortable.

“He is never to be mentioned again, a disgrace to his kin and for a man cub, the enemy.”

“Well I think they have parted company anyway the man cub went home alone.”

“Then Canine has no family at all. He deserves all he gets.”

“But what about the man cub, he caused it at the end of the day?”

“There’s nothing I can do about it. He is back amongst his kind now.”

“Maybe but I happen to know that he will be on his own tomorrow.”

“Really,” Lupine said and the magpie went on to tell him his plan. The wolf would wait a safe distance away and when the magpie located Dol from the air it would guide the wolf to him.

“Definitely a monster,” Aam said as the masters watched the scene play out, “I think we might have overdone it with the cunning.”

“It certainly looks that way,” Etop admitted, “With a mind like that it could take control of everything.”

“Quite a major problem,” Dah said, “And drastic action is needed I fear.”

“Yes,” Etop said, “But what?”

“Make it sterile and the problem goes away,” Aam said.

“Well beyond our mandate,” Etop said, “We are not allowed to interfere to that extent.”

“What alternative is there,” Aam said in desperation, “It could alter the whole Grand Design.”

“Surely it’s not that bad,” Siscail said, “Malicious gossip that’s all.”

“It goes a lot deeper than that Siscail,” Etop said, “It has turned father against son, brother against brother.”

“Divide to conquer,” Aam said, “It just picks up the pieces after it’s all over.”

“It could rule if it had a mind to,” Dah said, “Turn the animals against man is all that it would need to do.”

“I see,” Sischai said upon realisation, “And with man's fall it would just take over.”

“And who will tend the Earth then?” Dah said, “The magpies not equipped to.”

“Quite a major problem,” Etop said, “We’ll need to give the matter a great deal of thought.”

Afternoon had arrived at the complex and Dol was showing the clan how to make glue. Once done he showed them how to improve their spears. The clan marvelled at this new found knowledge and Sel saw his chance of revenge, “My son has proved wise beyond his years.” Sel said once he had the audience’s attention, “I say that as a mark of respect to him he should have the honour of taking his test of man hood early. No clan member has had this honour before but then again no clan member has ever found the secret of fire before.”

The clan cheered and Dol unaware that it was a trap quickly accepted. In the shadows Calp watched and studied Sel’s manner. Sel was a good actor he admitted but now and again when he thought no one looking he would slip into a look of hatred that only meant one thing. Yes, Calp thought to himself tomorrow will be an eventful day.

As nightfall came Dol managed to sneak off and see Canine. He told him about his quest

for man hood the following day and said that after he had passed it he would become a man. He would then tell them about Canine for he reasoned that he would have a lot more sway as a man than as a boy. Canine agreed and offered to round something up for him to make it easier.

“No this is something I have to do alone.”

“Not necessarily, I’m not too familiar with the ways of man I’ll admit but I do know that you were one of a twin.”

“Yes,” Dol said slightly confused.

“Then I would be right in thinking that you would have both been taking the test tomorrow.”

“Well yes,” Dol said not seeing what he was getting at, “But Garh is dead.”

“Then as you new brother I should have to take the test in his place. Don’t I need to be initiated into the clan as well?”

“I suppose so.”

“Good, I thought that you were going to deprive me of my rite of passage. And besides I’m hungry. You will be blessing it again with fire won’t you?”

“Sure,” Dol said with a laugh “It’s a deal then.” Arrangements made Dol went back and fell quickly to sleep. He met the man once more who said, “So you come of age tomorrow Dol. An honour truly deserved.”

“Er. Thanks,” Dol said not really knowing what to say.

“Be careful though for there is danger with that honour.”

“My father you mean?”

“Him, but I’m afraid that the magpie has been at work again.”

“Not again I thought that it would have been satisfied with the damage it has done already.”

“It means to see you dead and it will stop at nothing until it does.”

“So what has it done then?” Dol said not wanting to dwell on that point for too long.

“It has recruited Lupine; he has not forgiven you for splitting him up from his brother.”

“Quite an enemy though I think I feel safe with that spear you showed me how to make.”

“Good but I would think you would be better off with guile.”

“Really, what must I do?”

“You will know when the time approaches,” the old man said and before Dol had a chance to answer he disappeared.

Dol woke up in an excited mood. Today was his big day and he was going to enjoy it. Before he set off on his quest though he had to meet with the elders who were to tell him how they came to be.

“You are to become a man soon,” Cam said, “And as so should know of your history and special place in the scheme of things.”

“You are lucky to be a man,” Seth said, “It is a very privileged place that you hold and that should be remembered at all times.”

“How did it come to be that way?” Dol said continuing the ritual.

“It came that way long, long ago,” Seth said, “When the Bringer of Light called a meeting of all the animals. The Bringer of Light wanted one animal to lead the rest and decided that they should decide themselves who it should be. Each one wanted to rule and gave reasons why it should be them. The wolf said that it was the wisest and that was the best reason it could think of. The bear said that it was the strongest and that was the

best reason it could think off. This went on all the way around the animals for each one thought that it had a legitimate reason until it arrived at man. Man said that with all the reasons he had heard from the other animals he now thought that he was not worthy to lead and offered to relinquish his claim. The Bringer of Light heard this and decided that as the animals could not decide for themselves he would do it for them. Man got the position for all the other animals had acted out of pride. The Bringer of Light reasoned that although man relinquished his claim he was the only one humble enough to do the job that the Bringer of Light had in mind, to tend the Earth.”

“And that is how we came to be,” Cam said, “That is our special place in the scheme of things. You are a man now and have that responsibility to uphold.”

“A man with history,” Seth said, “And that is your next step to manhood Dol.”

“Yes, history,” Cam said, “The great clan of Phin goes right back to the beginning of things for that man was Phin himself.”

“From **Phin** came **Ev**,” Seth said, “A noble man who ruled with wisdom. It was he that took us to this complex where we have prospered greatly.”

“With Ev’s death his son **Erju** took over and ruled with honour,” Cam said, “It was he that faced off the great bear when it had come for its tribute. By his actions our first born were no longer sacrificed.”

“From Erju came **Dgeon**,” Seth said, “A man of dignity who ruled the longest. It was he who hunted the great boar that terrorised the complex and brought the rite of passage into being.”

“After Dgeon died his son **Lyc** took over,” Cam said, “A true king who judged with wisdom unsurpassed. Under his guidance the clan grew in strength and wisdom and prospered in the land around it.”

“After Lyc died his son **Oun** took over,” Seth said, “A tenacious warrior that drove off the wolves that had been eating our children. A truly brave man whose courage was beyond match and sense of honour was beyond reproach. He ruled in justice and never cowered.”

“From Oun we come to **Sel**,” Cam said, “The history of the clan is now complete Dol. The future is yet to be recorded. That will be done by you Dol, by you and your descendants.”

“Heed those words well Dol,” Seth said, “For you are of noble birth and have a lot of honour to uphold.”

“I will try my best,” Dol said and the ceremony was over.

## Chapter 4

It was with a brisk step that Dol left the complex and embarked on his quest for adulthood. He held his new spear tightly as he marched into the shrub-land looking around for adventure. He was about a mile away when he first whistled Canine. Much to Dol’s surprise Canine did not appear as normal so he tried again but to no avail. He walked on some more seeing if he could find him but after an hour’s fruitless searching he gave up. He sat awhile to try and think where Canine might be when he was interrupted by an angry voice. “You killed my son and for that you’ll pay dearly,” it was Sel.

Without fear Dol said, “He was also my brother and I did not kill him.”

“You have always been a liar,” Sel said It was a curse the day that you were born.”



“You would take word of a magpie over your own son,” Dol said, “Maybe the curse was having you as a father.”

“Well that curse will soon be lifted,” Sel said and pointed his spear at Dol, “You may have created this but through me it will destroy you.”

“Not so fast,” another voice said and Lupine made his appearance, “This cub and me have previous business.”

“This cub as you call it has killed my son,” Sel said, “There can be no greater crime.”

“It is not the severity of the crime that bothers me. You have no case greater than mine. I am not here to debate with you. I have come to take my vengeance and no one will stand in my way.”

“You overestimate yourselfm” Sel said and went towards Lupine with the spear at the ready.

“It does not need to be like this,” another voice and Dol looked around and much to his horror it was the magpie, “Surely as long as the deed is done it does not matter who does it.”

“You,” Sel said angrily, “I told you I was to do this alone. You treacherous bird you dare to try and detract from my honour.”

“What, I’ve done nothing but help you. It was not I that killed your son.”

“No, it was you who tried to take the honour of revenge away from me though. You call yourself a friend.”

“You men are a strange breed. I have done what you have asked of me though and I can do no more.”

“You have done nothing for me; you will not get the secret of fire from me.”

“You lied to me. That will teach me not to deal with man again. No matter for every time I see your fire I will steal it from you,” and flew off leaving the wolf and Sel to argue it out.

“We both want him dead,” Lupine said “It’s just the honour of killing him that’s at stake.”

“True that could easily be settled. We could both do it at the same time so we can both have the honour. As long as he does not see the day out that’s all that matters.”

“Wise words and well spoken,” Lupine said and looked menacingly at Dol. It was then that Dol made his move. “Lupine,” he shouted, “Defend me.” With that something strange happened to Lupine. It was like he was not in control any more. When he came around again Sel lay dead before him with his throat ripped out and he had acquired a spear wound to his side.

“You will pay dearly for that,” Lupine said through pain and limped towards Dol.

“Not while I’m here,” Canine had appeared and stood between them.

“You bring more dishonour to your kin,” Lupine said.

“Not my kin. If you had any sense you would leave.”

A spear flew past Lupine as Canine said that and Calp appeared from the undergrowth. Seeing himself out numbered Lupine ran away as quickly as he could leaving Calp looking at Canine suspiciously.

“He is my friend,” Dol said, “He has saved my life on more than one occasion.”

“He is my brother,” Canine said without fear and Dol nodded his head.

“If that be the king will,” Calp said and bowed his head.

While this was happening the magpie was making his way back to the complex. It had,

had enough of man and his treacherous nature. It vowed that it would do anything in its power to bring about his demise and when all the other animals heard about its plight then it knew they would come to its aid. The magpie reasoned that it would just steal the fire and as it approached the complex it looked around to see if there was one left unattended. It saw one and decided to make a snatch at it. Now the magpie although clever was not too worldly wise about fire. It knew that it was hot but it did not realise it could burn. The magpie thought that it could tolerate the heat long enough to quickly hop on and peck a twig from the fire and then fly off. It took one last look around to make sure that no one was about before flying into the heat of the fire. It quickly tilted its head down to pick up a twig and it was then that it hit it. It dropped the twig and flew out of the fire to check the damage. The magpie had been badly burned. Where once it was pure white it now had 50% burns. Its head was badly burned where it had put it down to pick up the twig and around its feet and on its wings there were also traces. The fire had also semi blinded the magpie so that it thought that anything shiny was fire. It hadn't blinded it to the magpie's hatred for man and its pledge to steal man's fire where ever it could find it though. The magpie vowed to handle it with care from now on for it carried the burns to remind it of its rashness.

The magpie's troubles were not over though for its fate was being decided in another dimension,"It looks like the magpie has got its just rewards," Aam said, "And it will always carry those burns as a reminder."

"No," Etop said, "The problem had escalated if nothing else got worse. We are going to have to do something pretty quickly to stem this."

"Got worse?" Aam said in surprise.

"It has vowed to unite the animals against man," Etop said, "And it has a good reason because of Sel."

"What's to do then?" Dah said, "The only thing I can think of is not in our mandate."

"We don't do extinctions," Etop said, "But maybe there is a way around all this."

"You're a better man than I if you can find it," Dah said, "For the life of me I can't think of anything."

"The magpie is a malicious gossip," Etop said, "The only way we can really stop it is to make it that no other animal understands it."

"Amazing," Dah said, "Truly inspiring."

"Is that not too harsh," Sicai said, "It will be a life of isolation."

"That's all we can do," Etop said, "Unless you know of something else."

Sicai thought a while before saying, "Yes what about this one. We cannot judge children for they are not accountable."

"Yes," Etop said slightly confused.

"So while they are children they have the ability," Sicai said "And when they grow up they lose it."

Etop looked around the table and said, "That sounds fair to me, all in favour," everyone around the table put up their hands so the motion was quickly accepted. The magpie lost its ability to converse with other animals although it you catch it when it is young and without guile you may teach it once again.

Back in the material world Dol and Canine were looking over the body of Dol's dead father, "A worthless man but he was my father I suppose."

"We can't help who brings us into being though I feel for you loss. I have more bad news

I'm afraid."

"More?"

"Lupine has driven my mate and cubs from the pack. I fear that I must leave you for they will want tending. That is what delayed me, for that I apologise."

"Why not bring them here. Our friendship need not suffer; after all you are my brother."

"I was hoping you would say that," Canine said and gave a sharp bark. From the undergrowth a white wolf and four cubs appeared and they all got acquainted. After the formalities they went back to the complex where Dol was recognised as king and for seven cycles they stayed there and grew in understanding of each other and fire. Dol proved wise in the early years and brought forth new ideas. He was still acquainted with the man who showed him how to fashion clay and make animal traps for they had started eating meat. Every new idea was watched by the Masters of Wisdom though and long debates ensued. Dol was still to be judged and the frequency of the innovations could only mean one thing. They reasoned that Dol must still be consorting with demons and though a child in its ignorance could not be blamed Dol was nearly a man. Like the clan of Phin the Masters set the age at twenty years and Dol was only a couple of Moons away.

"His time nears," Aam said, "Yet we have nothing solid to try him on."

"It's obvious," Etop said, "He could not do it on his own. No mortal man could. One innovation maybe two but no he must be getting help."

"It's not forced to be a demon though," Dah said.

"Well who else could it be?" Etop said, "Unless you are suggesting that it was one of us."

"Not us," Dah said, "But what about one of the elemental spirits?"

"I never thought," Etop said.

"If that's the case he has nothing to answer for," Dah said, "Well what I know of anyway."

"Looking at it logically there is a good chance that it is," Aam said, "I would say that it is Bruga the fire element for all the innovations are centred around fire."

"Yes," Etop said, "And he would know the answer to the first question for he was created the same time as the monsercat."

"Then it stands to reason," Aam said, "The boy is without charge."

"Yes," Etop said, "So we will have to find one."

"What?" Aam said in surprise.

"He progresses too quickly," Etop said, "Generations in one lifetime he could easily upset the balance."

"But if the fire element is helping him then it is meant to be," Dah said, "No matter the speed."

"I can see that you have not really thought it through," Etop said, "His strength is our weakness."

"What," Dah said surprised at the sudden turn of events.

"We were created to uphold the Grand Design," Etop said, "When it comes to fruition then our job is over and we have served our purpose and so no longer exist."

"Yes," Dah said, "I am aware of that."

"He has already reduced our time a hundred cycles," Etop said, "With the right instruction how many more cycles can we lose. You thought our demise was long in the distance this man could actually make it reality."

“I did not realise,” Dah said, “Then he must be stopped at all costs.”

“We cannot interfere with the evolution of man,” Sicai said, “That is set in stone.”

“We already have,” Sihai said, “Don’t you realise the damage this man can do to us?”

“We are accountable,” Sicai said, “That is all I am saying.”

“Very true,” Etop said and thought a while, “Up until now he has been clean but he will fall by the way side. Mortal man quickly hardens his heart when he comes of age.”

“And in the meantime?” Dah said.

“Sent him into the big world,” Etop said, “Where there is more opportunity to transgress.”

“Good,” Dah said, “And may I suggest we split the clan to isolate him more?”

“Yes,” Etop said, “Good thinking. Some men will survive then so the Grand Design lives on,” and thus the seeds of Dol’s fall were planted in notion.

All this went unaware by Dol as he called a meeting of the clan. His seven year growth was completed and he truly looked the man he had become. He had got restless recently for he had been given a nomadic nature and now it was time he made it reality. The large cavern held six hundred but still they waited for some could not get in.

“Members of the clan Phin,” Dol said, “We are privileged as men for we have mastery of the outside world yet we stay here and crowd out the complex. We were put here to tend the Earth yet we stay here and shun our job. I say that we must spread out and see what the world actually looks like.”

“Good words,” Cam said, “And well spoken. Our hunters need adventure and our food is barely enough to sustain us. I say we should go forward and see what it has to offer us.”

The clan cheered at that so plans were drawn up and sub kings elected. The clan subdivided into nine sections of around eighty people and these were to be the groups. One group remained at the complex and the other eight went off in different direction. Although they were still of the clan Phin they took new clan names which were the names of the elected kings. Dol as over-king though kept the original clan name. Clan **con** remained while the other eight departed. Clan **dit** went North, clan **ion** went North East, clan **al** went East, clan **hel** went South East, clan **phin** along with Dol went South, clan **der** went South West, clan **spro** went west and clan **gress** went North West. And so man spread over the face of the Earth.

The Masters of Wisdom watched with eager anticipation as Dol made his way south. He had a mate now and a child of his own .They watched and waited but still Dol was flawless. Time passed by and Dol turned twenty. It was then that they made their move. It was reasoned that Dol might be a long time in his hardening of heart and so a temptation was in order. The tale picks up at Dol’s celebration rite which had been a bone of contention in itself. The journey of the quest for adulthood takes seven years to come to fruition. So although you start it at 13 it does not finish until you are 20 when you have a celebration rite. Normally that would fall in with your original celebration rite the day of your birth but Dol had taken his quest two months earlier. In the end it was decided that he would have two days, one his real birthday and the official one when he had completed his quest. Dol enjoyed this though for he still had a childish heart and like to play and party.

The clan had settled in some caves’ by a Great Lake for it was time to take a look around the land and a base was needed to work from. This had took a full Moon to do and was finished just before his real celebration rite They came back in their hunting parties of ten

and related what they saw to Dol who quickly made a mental map of the area. He then drew it on the ground with his spear and said, "It seems we have found paradise. Bountiful game and good water supplies we could not ask for more. I suggest that we split once more though to take full advantage of this land."

"Very wise," Calp said, "For we are too large to feed as a party. What is your command?"

"I say groups of twenty that should be large enough to defend itself and small enough to sustain itself."

"Yes lord I will see that it's done."

"That will be tomorrow for today we shall celebrate." And the celebration began. Now as celebrations' go it was quite tame. It was just a collection of stories, personnel experiences told by the hunters that because of Sel's distaste for adventure were pretty tame. The great storyteller came on afterwards to talk of how Erju had faced and drove off the great bear and Oun defeated the wolves but even that was tame after what Dol had been through. Dol soon got tired of it though he had to remain for sake of formality. After it was finished he spoke quietly to Canine, "Not much of a celebration, it appears we have not much worth celebrating. Was it like that in your world?"

"We too told stories and though I am now old and grey I still remember being excited as a cub to listen to them."

"I fear our stories don't have that sort of appeal. Maybe things will change now we are Nomads."

"I hope so for I would like to have one more adventure before I die."

"Many cycles."

"Not as many as you think for we do not live as long as you do. See how grey I have become. My bones start to ache and I fear my time is running out."

"Don't say that I could never have life without you."

"I'm afraid it's true I fear that one adventure is all I have within me."

"Then it will be the greatest just tell me what you want it to be."

"You mean that for I do have something in mind."

"Whatever it is if it is in my power and if not I will try my best to get it."

"As I said earlier as a cub I was excited to hear the stories of how we drove off the bear and killed the great boar but one story always stuck in my memory. Would you like to hear it?"

"Yes then at least I will hear one good story tonight."

"Very well," Canine said and went on to relate it, "Sega was a great wolf renowned as a hunter and dispenser of wisdom. He knew that it was man and not the wolf that was destined to have fire but he was content with that for he also knew that he was not adapted to use it, not being able to grasp properly. His renown and rational outlook travelled as far as the Great Masters who decided that a reward was in order. They appeared to him in a dream and told him about a thing called mental fire. They did not tell him what it was; only that it was guarded by a terrible lizard that only lived while the knowledge remained secret."

"Then it will never divulge it and I fear that the threat of killing it would not work either."

"Strength of mind, it will ask a question and if you can answer it correctly it is compelled to tell you."

“Just the one, did you ever find out what it was?”

“He did not even find out where the lizard was. He searched the mountains and he searched the plains. Non-stop, remorseless he was. All he had was a verse for a guide and his own strength and fortitude. Year after year but still he never found it, well I don't think so for he never returned to tell the tale.”

“Then I fear we have no chance not with the time left anyway.”

“Not necessarily, in fact I think we might be pretty close. Well according to the verse that is.”

“Really, you must have remembered the verse then?”

“Past sharpened teeth in a valley deep, encased in sand that will never sleep, you'll find my cave but take a care, for I'm a demon and I live there.”

“I see, no wonder Sega never found it, it's a bit vague isn't it?”

“Well that's what I thought until you made those marks in the ground.”

They both walked back to Dol's drawing and Canine said, “Those hills look like teeth and the hunter that brought you that knowledge said that it was in a desert. A desert's sand never sleeps as it is always moving. I would say that if we can find a deep valley in those mountains we have found the place.”

“Well it would be worth a look and even if there was no cave it would still be quite an adventure.”

“Yes I could then go out in style.”

“I wish you would not say that.”

“It's true, we animals have always had a sense about our own demise. Generally we just go off into the wilderness and starve to death so this means a lot to me.”

“If you look at it like that and we all have to accept the inevitable but I wish you would not mention it again.”

“Fair enough,” Canine said and said no more.

The following morning the band split up and dispersed. Dol took his mate Ban and 18 others and headed towards the desert which they got to the following evening. The mountains looked a good day's walk so they camped there. Dol left Calp in charge while he and Canine started the trek. It was hot and it was hard going but they reached the mountains by nightfall and after Dol had made a fire they sat around it and took in its warmth.

“It makes me feel young again,” Canine said, “It seems like a lifetime since we last did this.”

“It has been a long time. Many things have changed, but yes it does feel good.”

“And tomorrow adventure, we are very lucky men.”

They slept that night and the next morning came quickly. They scouted around the hills and sure enough found a thin entrance that led to a large valley. It was an unusual valley that went down a lot deeper than the sand that was behind them. Half an hour past and they found themselves at the bottom of the valley. They looked around in the hope of finding a cave and searched for another hour before they eventually found it. Canine and Dol waited outside while they debated their next move. This became quite heated because Canine wanted to sacrifice his life to find the answer to the question but Dol wanted nothing to do with it. It was eventually settled when Canine said that it would be an insult to him if Dol would not let him as his previous brother had done it. Reluctantly Dol listened as Canine made his approach.

“I come for the secret of mental fire,” he heard Canine saying.

“Many have tried, what makes you so special?” a cackling voice answered.

“Have you a question?”

“Very well, I see beyond time though I travel no distance my job is to know and to seek out resistance, what am I?”

It went quiet for awhile before the voice spoke again, “No answer. Well just to put you out of your misery before I put you out of your misery I am insight.” With that with spear held in hand Dol rushed in to try and save his friend but much to his horror it was too late. He saw Canines hind legs disappear inside the lizards great mouth and shouted, “No,” because he was helpless to do anything else.

“More meat,” the lizard cackled, “Have you come to be tried?” Dol nodded so the lizard repeated the verse unaware that Dol had already heard it.

“Insight,” Dol said much to its shock.

“Very well, although you will not understand it.”

“I’ll take that risk.”

“Mental fire is the minds ability to purify itself of negative emotional memories. It takes away the emotional pain from the memory whilst leaving it intact. It involves the mind concentrating the negative memory into a picture and holding it to the left of its mental vision. The picture ignites at one corner and releases the pain as it burns itself out.”

“I did not understand it.”

“Then it was wasted,” the lizard said and burned out from within.

It was a sad Dol that made his way back to the others. He had lost his brother and for what. He could not understand the answer so it was no good to him. He was forlorn to say the least. In a different dimension things were happier though.

“There is your reason,” Etop said, “He has evolved out of balance. He was not ready for the information though he had passed the test. Cainu the keeper lost his life in vain for the information he had will long be forgotten by the time man has evolved enough to understand it.”

“Then what of his punishment,” Dah said, “It could cause quite a stir if we killed him.”

“I don’t plan on killing him,” Etop said, “I was thinking of taking him out of his environment and putting him out of harm’s way.”

“Sorry?” Dah said, “I am not with you,”

“I think he would be better off away from the rest of mankind,” Etop said, “Then he will have no more influence in the Grand Design.”

“Well how are you going to do that?” Aam said, “Now the clan of Phin has spread out across the land there is no where you can put him.”

“I was thinking of the sea,” Etop said, “Let him live with the fish,” and then laughed before saying, “And maybe it might dampen his desire for fire.”

They all laughed at that and when the laughter had subsided Aam said, “Then the sea it shall be. I think that the rest of his family should join him for company. He has a mate and child if I remember rightly.”

“Very well,” Etop said, “His son could grow up like him otherwise.”

And with that Dol and his family were erased from the collective memory and transformed and adapted to live in the sea.

## 2. Otter's Tale

Time moved on and the clan grew. They were unaware that Dol had even existed for he had been erased from the collective memory and although they had fire, dogs and pottery they did not know where they came from. Progress was slow and the Masters of Wisdom were happy though that was about to change. Creation is like a flint hitting a stone and sparking out life. Some of these sparks are brighter than others and now and again a particularly bright one comes down to Earth. Ot was his name and he came from the clan of Ter. Now readers of a discerning nature will find that clan name unfamiliar to them so at the risk of being accused of telling stories I had better explain the discrepancy. Der proved to be a worthless king with about the same taste for adventure as Sel and was quickly deselected and **Ter** took his place. He was a noble hunter and proved most able for the task. His son **Min** then took over but he lost his life fairly early and his son **Ate** took over from him and that was where it stopped (sorry about that one, incidentally readers of a less discerning nature might want to look at the genealogy and clan names once more).

Now Ate had a cousin called Ot who had always had a strange fascination for the water, one that transcended the in-built fear of his fellow man. To his fellow man, water although life giving as a drink was also a taker of life. Many had fell in and drowned as they washed at its edge for they had noticed it had a strange power of removing dirt and not only that there had been strange stories of monsters coming out of the water and grabbing their unsuspecting victims as they drank from the edge. Some of the braver hunters had ventured out in it up to their waists but that was as far as they got. Believing it an entrance to the Netherworld they would not go any further. Ot was different though. He had been brought up on how Erju had slain the two headed great bear when it had come for its tribute of his eldest son and they had inspired him to adventure. He was not naïve though. He knew that if he entered the entrance to the Netherworld he would not come out again so he had a healthy respect for the water. He used to just walk around the edge of the lake with his spear hoping that one day one of the monsters might reveal itself to him so he could tell Ot what went on in the watery world. Day after day he walked around the lake and saw nothing just the stillness of death He had become a bit of a figure of fun to the rest of the clan although that changed when he came back with a fish one day. He had been out on his usual stroll when something caught his eye. It was a flash of silver in the lake. Ot thought that maybe it was a monster so he jabbed it with his spear. More by luck than judgement he had caught a fish. He pulled it out and as it lay gasping for breath on the floor it said, "Put me back. I cannot live in your world, let me die in mine."

"I will," Ot said, "But first you must tell me about your world."

"I have no time," the fish said and much to Ot's horror died in front of him. He put the fish back in the lake but it just floated on the top.

"A noble gesture," a voice said from behind him, "But I fear it was a little too late." Ot turned around to see an old man who was looking at the floating fish.

"Curse my stupidity I just wanted to know what his world was like. I did not mean to kill it."

"I know and now you must eat it so it does not lose its life in vain for that is the ultimate crime."

"So what is it anyway," Ot said after he had pulled it out of the lake, "Some sort of



monster?”

The man laughed at that and said, “No, it’s called a fish. It lives in water as you live in land. It is two different worlds. You cannot live in his world as he cannot live in yours.”

“And his world is that the entrance to the Netherworld?”

The man laughed once more and said, “No, it’s just a separate world.”

“So these monsters that come out and grab you they don’t exist then?”

“They do it’s just that they don’t come from the Netherworld. You see Ot there are many animals that live under the water. You’ll be safe though for no monster lives here.”

“How did you know my name and not wanting to sound rude who are you?”

“I am Dina the water element and I know your name for I know of your kindness. Take that fish back with you and lightly burn it. You will find that it tastes good,” with that he disappeared much to Ot’s surprise. Ot looked around but there was no sign of him so he decided that he must be some sort of demon and as it was still daylight a good demon. He took the fish back to the cave complex where he was met by Ate who was waiting for the hunters return.

“Whatever is that you have in your hand?” Ate said “It is a strange looking creature,” and with that others came to join him.

“It is a fish. I got it from the lake.”

“Then it should go back again lest we find ourselves cursed by the Netherworld.”

“It is not from the Netherworld it is from the lake.”

“It is the same thing don’t you know anything.”

“That’s not what I was told I was told it was a separate world not connected with the Netherworld.”

“What, what nonsense. People should be ashamed of themselves, taking advantage of you because you are simple.”

“I am not simple,” Ot protested, “And I was told by a demon not a man.”

“You dare presume the rite of a king?” Ate said angrily for it was thought that a demon would only consort with a king.

“Well maybe not a demon but he did disappear.”

“It is bad enough that the rats mock me,” Ate said and stormed off leaving Ot alone in a crowd. Not for long though for his audience had more eager ears.

“So what is it, a fish?” Dag said “And you say you got it from the water.”

“Yes, that’s right I thought it was a monster under the water so I spiked it.”

“It certainly looks like a monster,” Clem said, “It has no arms or legs. However does it move around?”

“I don’t know but I know it moves pretty quickly.”

“And you are going to eat it. Rather you than me if it tastes as bad as it looks.”

“Time will tell,” Ot said and cooked it as directed. He tasted it and to him it was the best thing that he had eaten. He made a vow to himself that he would eat nothing else for its taste could not be bettered. His mate Shi was a little wiser though, “You may never find one again” She said “Don’t make rash vows.”

“It is done now I have already vowed it.”

“Then it is truly done maybe they’re right. You are simple.”

“But not for long,” a small voice cackled from the corner of the cave.

“Is there no privacy?” Shi said as she drove the rat out. After she had done that she said,

“Instead of making useless vows you ought to be trying to sort those rats out. They’re

getting a real problem. I can tell you.”

“I’ve tried talking to them.”

“Talking’s no good they just scorn you. Killing is the only answer.”

“Killing’s easy enough it’s catching them that is the problem. I’ve never seen anything move as quick.”

“And they are much too clever to be caught by our traps I ask them what they are doing here though and they haven’t a clue.”

“Yes, they do seem slow in certain things I offered them food and they tell me they would rather steal it. I tell them that they are welcome to help themselves to it and ask them not to make so much of a mess and they say that, that is how they must be. They don’t know why they are like that and are happy to be that way.”

“See talking is no good, they have no sense. Bit like you and your silly vows.”

“I mean it.”

“You were lucky to get that one you could starve to death before you got another”

“I know maybe I was a little rash. If I can’t find one I will have to go out and get one myself.”

“What enter the Netherworld?”

“It’s not the Netherworld it’s just a different world.”

“Maybe but it’s not a world you can survive in.”

“I know but there must be a way.”

“Ask the man well if you ever see him again.”

They retired to sleep not long afterwards and much to Ot’s surprise he met up with Dina again.

“So how did it taste?” he said by way of greeting.

“I’ve never tasted anything finer. It is that good I have foolishly vowed that I will eat none other.”

“Ah I fear our acquaintance will not be a long one.”

“You know of the water world I was wondering if you had any thought about how I could get fish from it.”

“I have plenty of ideas but I’m afraid I cannot help you as it is deemed in the Grand Design that the worlds of the elements cannot meet. Man is not supposed to have fish as they are from two different worlds.”

“But you told me to eat it and now I will starve to death because of it.”

“You had already killed it; it would be a major crime to let it go to waste. At the time it was the lesser of two evils.”

“But what now am I to die in vain?”

“I am afraid I have created quite a problem. If the Masters ever found out they would not be too pleased.”

“Who?”

“No matter I think I’ve made it complicated enough,” and thought awhile before saying, “I will tell you of our world and show you how to get these fish that you so crave but I will give you a provision. All that I tell you is to be kept secret from the rest of Man. You will not eat fish in front of them but go to a safe place away from prying eyes and eat it there.”

“Fair enough,” Ot said in an off-hand manner.

“No, I am deadly serious. The secret is between me and you only. It will die with your

death and so no man will ever know. If any other man finds out then it will surely get back to the Masters and then I am no more.”

“Well fair enough,” Ot said in a more serious manner, “But we have already eaten one. Doesn’t that sort of null it?”

“No they have reasoned it as a one off, a freak occurrence. It caused quite a stir when you caught that fish, I can tell you.”

“I bet it must have.”

“Now not only must you tell no one it is only safe for me to talk to you in the Netherworld so I can only teach you at night.”

“You saw me in the daylight they must already know then.”

“No,” Dina said with a smile, “I sneaked in during the commotion, your kindness compelled me to it, when you respected its wishes, albeit too late.”

“It was my ignorance that killed the fish so maybe you could enlighten me?”

“Right,” Dina said with a laugh, “Well the first thing to tell you is the main difference between our worlds. You live in a land of air and fish live in a land of water. You cannot breathe water so when you enter into our world you must hold your breath. I am telling you this before we start just in case you fall in. Hold your breath and it might save your life.”

“I’ll definitely keep that in mind.”

“That will be all for now I’m afraid,” Dina said and disappeared.

In a reality far away though the conversation continued.

“Well he certainly caused us a few worries,” Aam said.

“It was just a freak accident though,” Dah said, “They say that he thought it was a monster from the Netherworld” and laughed.

“Shall we keep an eye on him just in case?” Sicai said.

“Shouldn’t think we’ll bother,” Etop said, “They all seem to think that he’s a bit simple.”

“Still quite a shock though,” Aam said, “Well at least things should get back to normal now I like it when it’s quiet.”

“Couldn’t agree more,” Etop said and left it at that.

Ot woke up to see that the rats had been busy again. They left their droppings everywhere. It was their ultimate insult for they used to say that the cave was just a toilet. How he hated the rats but he could do nothing to stop them. He had to put them out of his mind though for he had a fish to catch. He reasoned that though he caught the first one in ignorance he knew what he was looking for now so maybe it would be a little easier.

After an hour’s fruitless search though he was starting to think differently.

“Waste of time,” he said aloud although there was nobody close to hear, “What a fool I am. I’ve cursed myself to starvation, will I never learn,” he sat beside the lake and just looked out into the bleakness. “It would be better if I could get out into the middle instead of just waiting for them to come to the edge. However could I get to the middle though?” this thought occupied the next hour although nothing came from it and it was a depressed Ot that made his way home that day. He was not made any happier when he arrived back either.

“I thought you were going to sort those rats out,” Shi said, “Where have you been all day?”

“Down by the lake.”

“Wasting time then while the rats scorn us daily you should be ashamed Ot.”

“I’ll have another word that’s all I can do.”

“Then it’s a waste of time I’m going to my mothers. I’ll not come back until they have gone,” and stormed out.

“Your mother’s got rats as well,” Ot shouted after her but she never came back. “See what you have done,” Ot said to a rat after she had left, “Why do you do this to us?”

“I don’t know,” the rat said with indifference.

“You must,” Ot said not wanting to let the matter drop.

“I don’t,” the rat said with more feeling.

“You are not that stupid surely?” Ot said out of desperation.

“You set your traps for me but I am too clever. You set your dogs on me but I am too quick for them. Does that sound like someone who is stupid?”

“You don’t know why you do what you do; doesn’t that sound like someone who is stupid?”

“Maybe it’s my place in the order of things. I’ve done what my father has done and his father before him has done. Surely we are not all stupid. No I say we do this because it is our job in the plan of things.”

“To cause all this waste surely that is a crime.”

“If it is then I am not aware of it though I don’t think it is because we are conditioned to do it. In fact I would say that it isn’t a crime because no animal is conditioned to sin.”

“And where does that leave me it’s like I’ve been cursed.”

“Then maybe you should be asking what you have done to earn this curse for no one is cursed without good reason,” and ran off because it got bored with the conversation.

It was a very confused Ot that entered the Netherworld that night. Dina was there to enlighten him though.

“Are we cursed?” Ot said because it was still fresh in his mind.

“Sorry?”

“I was talking to one of those rats he seems to think that we are,” and went on to tell Dina about the conversation. After he had finished Dina said, “Well there was talk of something. I don’t know the actual circumstances but it appears that because of Man the rats were expelled from the Grand Design. The rat has no choice but to live in Man’s world.”

“Oh then it appears there is nothing I can do about it.”

“I’m afraid not it is something that you will have to put up with. Now I will tell you more about my world.”

“Oh good I’ve been thinking about that actually.”

“You have?”

“Yes I reckon that if I can get out into the middle of the lake I would have a better chance of catching a fish That must be where they have their dwellings after all.”

“Fish don’t have dwellings,” Dina said with a laugh, “They are not like Man.”

“Oh,” Ot said with more than just a hint of disappointment, “So it would be a waste of time then.”

“Not necessarily it would be a good thing to know if you have a mind to hear it.”

“Fair enough,” Ot said although he could not really see the point.

“Now,” Dina said getting into his flow, “As I said earlier you cannot live in the water world but you can enter it for as long as you can hold your breath. You can travel over it though for you will still be living in the outer world.”

“Really?” Ot said, his interest picking up.

“Yes,” Dina said, “You can do this in two different ways. You can float on it or you can swim in it.”

“Float and swim?” Ot said for he was unfamiliar with the terms.

“Yes, do you remember that dead fish? How it did not re enter the water world but stopped at the top that was floating. Swimming was what he was doing before he met you.”

“Right so this floating then .I. er. don’t need to be dead before I do it do I?”

“Yes,” Dina said with a laugh, “That will be the only time that you can float of your own accord.”

“Then that’s a bit pointless.”

“That way yes but I did say of your own accord. If you want to float you have to get something that floats already and use it as a base.”

“I don’t think I have seen anything on the lake. Where could I get something that floats?”

“That fallen tree near where you first found that fish that will float; you just sit astride it and use your legs to walk it.”

“That tree looks too heavy it will never float.”

“Try it,” Dina said, “You’ll be surprised” and disappeared.

Ot woke to a brand new day. He looked around to see the mess the rats had made and as he thought that it was ordained to be that way he did not seem as agitated by it as normal. He even greeted the rat which was unusual for he generally tried to ignore them. “It seems you were right,” he said “You are cursed to live in my world.”

“No,” the rat protested, “It is you that are cursed.”

“That is not what I was told. I was told that you were expelled from the Grand Design and cursed to live in the world of Man.”

“Who told you that? Your uncle is right. People should be ashamed of themselves.”

“I am not simple and it was Dina, the water element.”

“You have spoken with the King of the water world,” the rat mocked, “Don’t make me laugh.”

“It is true and that is what he told me.”

“You are a liar and a fool for thinking I am simple enough to believe you. You are not talking to the ignorant.”

“Well have it your own way,” Ot said with an indifference that did not go unnoticed by the rat.

“So you have seen him then what else did he say?”

“That was about it really except that it was because of Man you were cursed.”

“You know you might be right for it is just as much as a curse for us as for you.”

“What? Are you serious?”

“Sure have you ever listened to yourselves? You go on and on about things so trivial yet they are a matter of life and death decisions to you. Seriously from a rat’s point of view you are a total waste of time. Yes, we were definitely cursed and by you from what you have told me. I hope you remember that the next time you turn on us.”

“I’ll bare that in mind,” Ot said duly humbled.

“So you have met with the King of the water world that’s quite an honour, did he tell you er, anything interesting?”

“How to bless fish, oh and how to travel over his world.”

“Really, now that is one thing that I would like to do. It might even be the answer to our little problem.”

“How?”

“Well think about it I cannot live in the Grand Design because of Man nor can I really live in the land of Man because I hate it. I cannot live in the water world because I cannot survive but I can live on the water world if I knew how to travel over it.”

“And?”

“Teach me how to travel over water and I would say that you have found us a new home. It is between worlds so it is not part of the Grand Design.”

“And if I teach you, you will leave us in peace?”

“Yes, as I said it is just as much a curse as it is to you.”

“I’ll see what I can do” Ot said and said no more.

Ot left the rat and travelled the short distance to the lake. He looked around in the hope of finding a stray fish but after an hour gave up He went over to the tree after that and looking at it said, “You’ll never float,” he pulled on it and it moved quite easily so he took it to the edge of the lake. He pushed it into the lake and sure enough it floated. Ot then climbed on it and sat astride the torso and as he started walking the tree moved out towards the middle of the lake. Fear stopped him going out too far the first time so instead he practised trying to manoeuvre it. Much to his delight he found that he could steer it slightly with his spear and to further enhance his elation he even caught a fish. He steered the tree to shore and pulled it up onto the land, then made a fire and cooked his fish. As the fish was cooking he looked at the tree and thought it too big and cumbersome. He thought that it would be easier to steer if it did not have so many branches so he started trimming them. He stopped for a while to eat the fish when it was cooked and then continued with his work. He did not realise that he was being watched. “See I told you that he had been talking with Dina,” the rat that had spoken to Ot earlier was saying to two friends.

“It must be true,” one of his friends said, “I apologise Ren.”

“He might only be cutting food for the fire monster,” the other friend said, “I’ve seen how it eats.”

“No Drega he has already been out on it.”

“Only you have seen that.”

“Well I came back to tell you as quickly as I could, be patient and I am sure he will take it out again.”

After Ot had finished trimming the branches he pushed the tree out onto the lake once more. He found that he could manoeuvre it a lot easier and this encouraged him to go out a lot further.

“I apologise Ren it seems you were right.”

“No matter.”

“Mind you,” Drega said putting a dampener on things, “It is no good to us, we are not adapted to do that.”

“Well true though we might be able to hide on it. No, that secret is not much use to us. But I am thinking that there may be others that will be.”

“Time will tell on that one.”

“Then I will follow him every day and as he’s a bit simple I might even trick him into telling us. He said that he would but I fear the word of Man is not to be relied on.”

“Traacherous animals you would be wise to follow him,” and they made their way back home.

Ot stayed the rest of the day on the lake and got fairly good at manoeuvring the log. He had a few near misses with the log trying to throw him off at first but he soon had it mastered. Tiredness and lack of light made him bring the adventure to an end for the day and he walked the short distance back. Shi had not returned from her mother’s so he had the place to himself. Well almost for he was greeted on arrival. “So any news?” it was Ren.

“I don’t see him until night-time,” Ot said “I will ask him then.”

“Fair enough so did you get up to anything interesting?”

“No, er, not really.”

“I saw you it seems to me that all is not what it seems.”

“Ah I was sworn to secrecy. I can tell no man.”

“But I am not a man.”

“Very true I never thought,” and went on to relate what he had learned so far. After he had finished Ren said, “And will you take me next time you go out?”

“One condition, I will take you out if you promise me to leave my cave alone in future .There are countless other caves you can use so it’s not much to ask.”

“I’ll accept that condition and vow that none of my kind will enter your cave.”

“Then tomorrow I will take you,” Ot said and the conversation finished.

## **Chapter 2**

Ot entered the Netherworld to a very irate Dina. “What do you think you are playing at? Did I not say that it was a secret between me and you?”

“You told me to tell no man, it was a rat.”

“Rat, man, dog anyone. If it gets back to the Masters we’ll be history.”

“What both of us?”

“You don’t think that they would let you get away with it do you? They would not risk it.”

“I did not realise.”

“Well you do now so how did you get on today?”

“I managed to float. You were right about the tree. I trimmed the branches off and it became quite agile.”

“Good, now you can put logs together and actually stand on it. So you need not get your feet wet.”

“How would I move it then I need my legs to propel it.”

“With your spear although if it had a larger head it will be more efficient.”

“And these logs how would I keep them together?”

“Wrap them with strong twine and tie them together.”

“Oh right yes I can see it working.”

“Now there is another way you can float and that is to cut a place out of the log that you may sit on. The tree that you have is too small but a wider one should do it.”

“Right and I use my spear to move it again?”

“Good, well that’s about it for floating. Remember what I said about it being a secret,” and disappeared.

Ot woke up to an empty cave. There was nobody about at all. The rat had been as good as

his word but that left a nasty problem. He had promised to take the rat out onto the lake and this went totally against what Dina had told him. He had also promised to tell the rat everything that was told to him little realising the implications it might have on him. Quite a quandary but Ot thought that he might have a solution. He would take the rat onto the log and let it drown. Cruel and some might say needless but to Ot it was the only thing he could do. He decided that he would first warn him of the danger though as this would give him a certain amount of cover if accusations flew. He was greeted on leaving the cave by two rats.

“So the big day,” Ren said.

“Yes I’ve been thinking of that.”

“You have?” Ren said suspiciously, “Not a change of heart I suppose, and after I have upheld my part of the bargain.”

“No, no, no, you are more than welcome to join me. It’s just I feel I ought to warn you of the danger.”

“I know the danger it does not scare me. Well if that’s the only thing that’s stopping us,” and they walked the short distance to the lake. During this time Ren introduced himself and Drega to Ot and they got fairly well acquainted. When they arrived Ot pushed the log into the lake and invited both of them to join him. Drega refused but Ren quickly jumped on and they were soon away. “Hold tight to that branch stub,” Ot said, “Sometimes it can be treacherous”

“This is amazing,” Ren said as he held on tightly, “I know of nothing better.”

“Yes it is good,” Ot agreed. He was having second thoughts about killing Ren. Ren seemed to love the water as much as he did. But it had to be done he thought to himself as he knocked the log and sent Ren into a watery grave. Well that was the idea anyway but with life sometimes things do not work out to plan. Ren found out that he could swim, not straight away for the panic took him, his head went under and he kicked his limbs in a frenzy. To his surprise his head came back up and he found that he could tread water. His next logical step was to try and make it back to the log so he scrambled towards it and found that he could swim. Once he had found this out Ren decided to swim for the shore and a much surprised Drega. He was not the only one though for Ot was heading back to the bank.

“What happened?” Ot said, “The log just flipped, it does that sometimes.”

“No matter,” Ren said with joy, “That was amazing, you ought to try it Drega,” and told him how it was done. Drega tried it and mastered it quite easily and went back to spread the word.

“Looks like the curse is lifted,” Ren said, “Now we can do that we can live on the water world.”

“So it is done?”

“Well after the meeting I should say that it should be just a formality though.”

“You know I think I will probably miss you daft as it sounds.”

“You’ll see me often enough on the lake I will come and let you know how the meeting got on tomorrow,” and scampered off.

Ot got home and much to his surprise Shi had returned. “Well,” she said by way of greeting, “However did you manage it?”

“Just a quite word and a little understanding.”

“You paid them off well that’s the only thing I can think of.”



“Maybe, I think they will all be leaving soon.”

“I’ll be glad to see the back of them.”

“I don’t know about that.”

Now news of the rats new found talent did not go unnoticed by the Masters of Wisdom.

“This is not meant to be,” Etop said, “Two worlds have collided. How did those rats learn to swim? Something strange is going on.”

“I don’t know,” Aam admitted “It seems that they just found it.”

“And what were they doing when they found it?” Etop said, “What were they doing in water for a start?”

“I don’t know,” Aam said again, “The first time I noticed anything strange was when they were all swimming.”

“If I did not know him to be a simpleton I would say that Ot had something to do with it,” Etop said, “We’ll keep an eye on the rats and see if anything else unfolds,” and it was duly done.

Meanwhile the meeting of the rats had got under way Ren had the chair, “Brothers of the Long Tail, today we are free. The curse has been lifted.”

“What curse?” Stima interrupted him.

“Well you would not call it a blessing would you,” Ren said, “Living in the world of man.”

“Why not, we do not have to hunt for food we just help ourselves. We have shelter and even take warmth from the fire monster.”

Ren was quite taken back by that because he thought that all the rats had a similar view to himself. “Do you call that existence?” he said, “We have put our whole survival in the hands of man. Do you really think that wise?”

“It pleases for the time being,” Stima said, “Who knows what tomorrow will bring, is that not existence?”

“No,” Ren said, “We can live on the water world now .We will have our own world and with it dignity.”

“A full stomach is my dignity,” Stima said, “Sure we can travel over the water world but what good can that do? Where will we get food from and what about shelter?”

“Sounds to me you’ve got soft.”

“Too much good living is not a bad thing. I’m afraid we are not of one mind I suggest that we vote and those that want to leave can do.”

“Fair enough,” Ren said and much to his surprise only a third of the rats agreed with him.

“Then that is settled,” Stima said.

“One final thing,” Ren said, “The cave of Ot is to be left alone. Have I your word on the matter.”

“We will honour your promise for we are not men,” Stima said, “Besides from what I have heard it was through him that you learned how to travel.”

“Then I am obliged to you,” Ren said and the meeting was over.

Ot’s journey to the Netherworld was slightly warmer than the previous one.

“It seems someone is looking over you,” Dina said, “The blame has fallen on the rats. Let that be a lesson though, no one else can know.”

“Fair enough, quite a relief I can tell you.”

“You were very lucky, taking an animal’s life is not to be treated lightly. What a way to learn how to swim though,” and started to laugh.

“Was that swimming then? I’ve never seen it before.”

“That was swimming. You see what the rat did just do the same thing and it will propel you. If you stop you must do what the rat did, tread water.”

“What? Is it as easy as that?”

“Well yes even dogs can do it. Don’t go out too far at first and you should be safe. The Masters should think that you learned it from the rats so you should be safe to practice with that. Don’t tell anyone different and we should be alright.”

“So why are the worlds destined to be apart anyway. I can’t see a reason.”

“No real reason, it was thought that if they were kept separate they would balance better.”

“Balance?”

“Yes, everything has to balance, its Creation’s ultimate aim.”

“Why?”

“Balance creates perfection and when that happens Creation comes to fruition,” Dina saw that Ot did not understand him so he said, “How is that diet coming on?”

“I got another fish but I will not get fat on my conquests.”

“Then perhaps your next lesson will be how to fish, this maybe a problem though.”

“The Masters?”

“Yes, swimming we got away with, floating they don’t know about so you should be safe. Fishing though, you’re going too quickly for them.”

“Oh,” Said Ot with more than a hint of disappointment.

“Learn to swim first, that’s your next step anyway. You may continue to hunt with the spear in the meantime,” and disappeared.

Ot and Shi woke up to a rat-less cave and Ot saw Ren before he departed.

“Bad luck I’m afraid,” Ren said, “Many of them are happy enough as they are. They have promised to leave your cave alone as a mark of respect for me so hopefully you will be safe.”

“Thanks.”

“I did the best I could do. I’m sorry that I could do no more.”

“You did well; you have earned my gratitude truly.”

“Then we part as friends,” Ren said and went on to search for a new life.

Ot went back to the lake and tried his hand at swimming. The first few attempts ended unfavourably but Ot held his breath and was not out far enough to come to any real harm. Eventually though he managed to swim a few feet and from that a few more. He spent the whole morning practising and then come the afternoon he started to hunt for another fish. It was a hungry Ot that walked the short distance home and straight into another dilemma. “Good news Ot,” Shi said greeting him, “I have told the king that you have got rid of the rats from the cave and now he wants to see you.”

“What,” Ot said in shock, “Whatever did you want to do that for?”

“I thought that you would be pleased. Imagine the prestige of it all. You are the only person who has cleared his cave. Tell him how you did it and you could be quite the hero.”

“I can’t. I’m sworn to secrecy.”

“What? Don’t be silly, you and your stupid vows. You don’t know when you are well off. Imagine all that honour that’s available and you want to waste it for a silly oath. I don’t know why you take oaths anyway; no other man keeps his word from what I see. Sort those rats and you’ll be a man at last.”

“I can’t, it’s more than just an oath to another man it’s to a demon.”

“Then I fear I have dropped you in it. What are you consorting with demons for anyway? I thought that was the place of the king.”

“Yes, so now you truly see my problem. I can’t tell him the truth. I will be condemned in both the over and Netherworld.”

“Then I really have dropped you in it, I am truly sorry.”

“There must be some way out of it, something I can tell him.”

“You’ll have to find something quickly, I see him coming now.”

“So Ot,” Ate said as he entered the cave, “Shi tells me that you’ve got rid of your rat problem. I thought that I had better check it out for myself,” and looked around the cave. After he had finished he said, “Well it appears to be so. So tell me Ot, however did you manage it?”

“I er. talked to them and they agreed to leave me alone.”

“I’ve tried that myself on many occasions but to no avail. So tell me Ot, what did you say to them? There must have been something that I missed.”

“Well nothing really I just told them that they were making a mess and asked them to leave.”

“Come now Ot I’ve been that way many times and all they ever did was scorn me.”

“That was all I said.”

“Now Ot,” Ate said slightly angrier, “If you know something don’t keep it from us. They ruin our food to the extent that some of us go hungry. It is time we got rid of them once and for all.”

“That was all I said,” Ot repeated.

“Very well,” Ate said in anger, “If you can clear your cave you can clear all of the caves, that is my judgement,” and stormed off.

“However am I going to do that?” Ot said after he had left.

“Maybe talk to them it worked for this cave.”

“The good ones have left; it is only the ones that we have made idle that stay. It is a sad predicament that I have found myself in.”

“I’m sorry, I meant well if that’s any help.”

“Maybe the demon will know, that’s the only thing that I can think of.”

“Then we really are in a mess. I’m truly sorry.”

In another cave Ate was trying out his powers of reason with a rat and as it Stima he was not doing too well. “Why do you make such a mess?”

“I don’t know,” Stima said and carried on.

“Look,” Ate said angrily, “You are making a mess, now kindly leave the cave.”

Stima carried on unperturbed so out of desperation Ate said, “You leave Ot’s alone, why not me. After all I am a king”

“Then you have the tastier morsels,” Stima said and carried on.

“Why do you leave Ot unmolested, at least tell me that.”

“The least I could do is nothing but rest assured that if I could do less I would.”

“Tell me and maybe there might be something I could give you.”

“I would just take it is that not my way?”

“Then there is no dealing with you, you are just a waste of time.”

“I have been brought up to treat the promise of Man with disdain so you waste your time when you promise things.”

“No, I am a man of my word. My promises I always keep. To me it is a matter of honour.”

“Honour and Man is that not a contradiction?”

“There is no dealing with you,” Ate said and went quiet for a moment before saying, “Unless?”

“Yes” Stima said stopping from his feed.

“I will give you the secret of fire then you can make your own warm dwellings.”

“Foolish man many a time we have watched you do it. We are not equipped to make it. Besides we already have warm dwellings. Yours.”

“Why you,” Ate said and chased him out of the cave.

Ot had entered the Netherworld and met up with Dina, “So how did you get on with your swimming?”

“Well not bad but I have other problems to contend with.”

“To get rid of the rats,” Dina said with a knowing smile.

“Ah, what can I do? I’m desperate.”

“Quite a predicament not really my jurisdiction.”

“I’m desperate,” Ot repeated..

“Well I know that its natural enemy is the cat. They just kill rats; they don’t eat them for they hate them that much.”

“So maybe if I got some cats to help me and I will bet they’ll do it just for the thrill.”

“I doubt it most of their time is spent hunting for food they can eat. They haven’t time for much else.”

“Oh so I am truly lost.”

“It might not be too bad, don’t mention me and you should be alright. Don’t forget that only a king can consort with a demon,” and laughed, “No, you should be safe. Just try your best and expect to get a little humiliated.”

“So I should be safe if I don’t mention you then. I just try and drive a few out so it looks like I am doing something.”

“That’s right. I hope that’s been of help for that is the best advice I can give. Anyway I mentioned fishing.”

“I thought you were going to leave that a while, let things settle down.”

“Well it has been awhile,” Dina said with a laugh before saying, “Now fishing can be done with the spear from the bank and from the log as you have already found out. There is another way with the spear though, one that might have escaped your notice.”

“There is?”

“Yes, you can swim out and spear them. To do this you must first practise your swimming until you can do it with ease. When you have mastered it you next must master how to swim under water and when you can do that you will be almost ready.”

“Almost ready?”

“Yes that spear you have is far too long to use with the ease you need for catching fish under water. I would say that you would need to make one about half the size.”

“And then I am ready?”

“Then you are ready,” Dina said and disappeared.

Ot rose early the next morning and went down to the lake again. He met with Ren and told him about his plight.

“I’m afraid there is not a lot I can do about it,” Ren said, “I could have a word if you like

but I am afraid they will take little notice of me. That Stima is pretty popular and he gives a good argument.”

“No joy there then, well I'm sure you will try your best so I'll say no more.”

“Have you come out to float the tree again? I wouldn't mind another go.”

“Well I was going to swim actually but I will take you out first if you like.”

“No, that's alright, so what's swim then?”

“That's what you do. That's what they call it, swimming.”

“And you can do that let me see.”

Ot walked into the lake and showed Ren how he swam. After he had finished Ren said,

“That's amazing.”

“Soon I'll be able to swim under water that should help me get some fish.”

“Swim under water, you can't do that, you'll die.”

“Not if I hold my breath. That's what I was told anyway.”

“I'll try that. Anyway I'll go and have a word with Stima and see what I can do.”

“Thanks much appreciated.”

“I don't see much hope but I'll try my best.”

Stima was in a conversation of his own though for Ate was trying another strategy, “So you leave him alone whilst he persecutes you.”

“What, that's news to me. Oh wait a moment; you are a man so it must be a lie.”

“You think so. You'll see.”

“Well he won't be any good anyway. We are well too quick for him to catch us.”

“Maybe he will cast another spell; I mean that is what he did wasn't it?”

“If you say so but I always thought that only a demon could do that. Do you think that he is a demon then?”

“No,” Ate snapped and thought awhile before he said, “Though he has said that he has spoken to one.”

“Then how does it reflect on you?”

“What?”

“I mean I thought that only a king can consort with demon and as you haven't and he has well who is to say who was the rightful king?”

“He hasn't consorted with a demon,” Ate snapped.

“Then he cannot have cast a spell. So what else do you think he might have done then?”

“You go too far if I ever lay my hands on you I will surely take your life.”

“Well why you don't ask a demon to help you, I mean after all you are a king.”

“Get out,” Ate said and chased it once more.

As Stima ran out of the cave he saw Ren and so ran over to him, “I thought you had left us. Life too difficult for you on the outside then.”

“No, I'm doing well I've come back to ask a favour,” and related Ot's predicament.

“Oh, I think I might have done him a disservice I was mocking Ate for he said that Ot must have cursed us. I said that only a king could consort with a demon and he did not seem too pleased with that.”

“Yes, that would be a bit of a sore point with him, especially as Ot would make a far better king. I fear that Ate will soon feel that way and want to kill him.”

“Are they like that then? I mean I know they are treacherous but they must have some standards surely.”

“When it comes to kingship I'm afraid with some men anything goes. That Ate seems to

be one of that kind.”

“I’ll tread more carefully in future. You seem to hold this Ot with honour. He must be an unusual man for from what I’ve seen of them they seem a little devoid of it.”

“Without him I would still be here, he gave me the freedom to escape this place.”

“You really don’t like it here. I mean I know that man can be quite a pain but it’s an easy life at the end of the day and he’s too stupid to do us real harm.”

“No it’s the freedom I crave. I can see your point of view and I respect your opinion but each to his own I say.”

“Fair enough and out of respect to you I will try and help Ot out of his predicament.”

“Thank you but I fear that the only thing that can really help him is the only thing you will not do.”

“There must be some way but you are right, we cannot leave this place. How could I persuade them to do that for just one, a man as well?”

“I understand, it is too much to ask from them, and as you say, for a man.”

“Yes but as I said earlier there must be something that we can do.”

“Have you any ideas?”

“Not at present I’m afraid. I would suggest that we hold a meeting and put it to the brothers.”

“I would say that’s the best thing, many heads, between them we must find something.”

“Then I shall get straight on to it for the longer we leave it the more danger for Ot.” and rushed off to get things organised.

### **Chapter3**

Ot remained at the lake after Ren had left him and tried his hand at swimming underwater. He had no luck at all with it so after an hour he gave up and reluctantly headed for home. He knew that he had to get rid of the rats but he also knew that he had no chance of doing it so it seemed to him an impossible cause.

The rats were having a meeting on the same subject. “Brothers of the Long Tail,” Stima said, “It appears that Man is set to move against us. Their king plots our downfall as we speak.”

“Nothing new about that,” a rat called Bitia said, “They are that stupid though so it never amounts to much.”

“Normally Bitia,” Stima said, “But this time he is using it as a potential excuse to get rid of a potential rival.”

“We do not interfere in the matters of men,” Bitia said, “We just steal from them.”

“I know,” Stima said, “But this time it is different. The rival is a man of honour, an unusual thing in the land of Man. It might be in our interests to help him.”

“What are you suggesting?” Bitia said, “The only way we could help him is to give up our homes.”

“No,” Stima said, “That is not an option. No I was thinking that I would throw it open and see if we can come up with anything. I know it is quite a problem but I think that between us we can work it out.”

“Is it worth the hard work,” Bitia said, “I mean after all he is only a man at the end of the day?”

“It is Ot,” Ren said, “I believe that we owe him.”

“We leave his cave untouched,” Bitia said, “Is that not enough?”

"I'm afraid that, that is what caused the problem. I would say that he is in great danger and needs our help. Now the only thing I can think of is that we make it that they think we've gone."

"Are you suggesting that we hide?" Bita said.

"Well during the day, we can come out at night and feed whilst they sleep."

"Hide from man. Never, it goes against all my sense of decency."

"I am not asking you to hide out of fear. I am asking you to hide to help Ot."

"It could be quite fun." Stima said, "They think we have gone and it's all over and then we steal their food and they will not know who has done it."

"Maybe," Bita said "But how will you hide so many of us?"

"I might just have the answer to that," Ren said.

"We're listening," Stima said now quite warming to the idea.

"When I first left the world of man I needed somewhere to shelter," Ren said, "I don't know why but I started digging, maybe it was instinct I'm not sure but soon I have made my own cave and it was very comfortable. I could easily teach you how to do it."

"Very well," Bita said, "But let it be stated here and now that we do not do this out of fear of Man."

"Does that really need saying?" Stima said and Ren showed them what he had done.

Soon there were burrows hidden everywhere and not a rat in sight.

"See how they have built their own homes," Dah said, "They must be getting helped."

"It might just be instinctive reaction," Etop said, "That is how they used to live before they moved into the world of man."

"And swimming?" Aam said.

"No," Etop said, "But I can see it as natural progression."

"You can?" Aam said.

"Yes," Etop said, "They move out of man's dwellings they would have to revert back to how they lived before."

"Then there is no crime," Aam said.

"Maybe not," Etop said, "But I would like to know why they hold Ot in high honour when they hate every other man alive."

"He must have taught them to swim then," Aam said, "That is the only thing I can think of."

"Maybe he's not so simple then," Etop said, "We had better keep an eye on him."

"I'm afraid that with the troubles elsewhere we are too stretched," Aam said, "Unless we lose our eye on the rats of course."

"I'm not sure," Etop said and thought awhile before saying, "No, we need to keep an eye on the rats."

"Then we have a problem," Aam said.

"Not necessarily," Dah said, "It is well known of the hatred that Ate has for him. These humans have no qualms about killing each other; I would say that it is only a matter of time."

"Well that is one way," Etop said, "And we cannot be responsible for the actions of man when he is deluded by greed. I think that maybe a little encouragement might be in order then."

"You are truly a wise man," Aam said and the conversation ended.

It was a dejected Ot that made his way home though on arrival he soon had a change of

heart.

“Well you did it,” Ate said, “I don’t know how but you certainly did it.”

“Sorry?” Ot said confused.

“The rats,” Ate said, “They have completely vanished. Not a sign of them anywhere. You have saved the clan of Ter and for that you will be duly honoured.”

“I did not do anything,” Ot said.

“Come now Ot I don’t think that they would have left of their own accord. You must have done something.”

“I have not had a chance to see them I have been at the lake all morning.”

“Well somebody must have done this,” Ate said as he walked off in confusion. By the time he had got home he had convinced himself that it was his talk to Stima that had done it though his mate had other ideas.

“You fool,” Cha said, “Can’t you see that he’s lying?”

“What don’t be silly, why ever would he do that?”

“I don’t know but I do know that it must have been him for he is the only one that could do it.”

“You underestimate me.”

“Not your stupidity. He is the only one that got rid of the rats from his cave. No one else has so that means it must be him. It also means that he is lying so the question you must ask yourself is why should he lie about something like that?”

“Well yes, he wouldn’t want to turn his back on all that honour so that means he is telling the truth.”

“Fool, that means he has something to hide. Something far greater than all that honour.”

“I never thought.”

“Then it is lucky I am here,” Cha said and went into thought before saying, “So what is greater than all that honour?”

“Kingship, he wants my calling.”

“Logic says that but the only way he would get that would be through the honour he refused.”

“True,” Ate said and thought some more.

Now while he is in thought it might be a good idea to elaborate on kingship .Kingship was a gift from the Bringer of Light to Phin for his humility at the beginning of things. It is a direct line set up by the Bringer of Light to help Man evolve and it was administered through Man’s humility by the elemental spirits that we call demons. Only a humble man can receive it and not as Man thought a king, well unless he was humble of course. Man’s logic dictated that only a king could receive it and so therefore anyone who did must be a king. This left Ot in quite a predicament for Ate’s jealousy could easily see Ot losing his life. Anyway back to Ate and Cha.

“Well,” Cha said after awhile, “We can take it that he means to be king. We have established that at least.”

“Yes although we don’t know how he plans to do it.”

“Follow him and see what he does and maybe if the chance was to arise when you are alone.”

“The problem would have sorted itself out. I bow down before your grace, you are truly wise.”

“Be discreet though who knows what questions might arise if you are caught.”



“I’ll bare that in mind I know how popular he is becoming.”

“And your king ship was through default,” Cha reminded him, “Your grandfather got it because Der proved useless. People have not forgotten that.”

“Yes they could easily turn against me as quickly. I’ll be very careful.”

“Oh it might be a good idea to claim the honour if Ot has refused it. It does not do to let opportunities like that slip away.”

“Yes, good thinking, it will strengthen my popularity.” and left to find Ot. He did not have to travel too far before he found him. “Ot,” he said calling him over, “It is your last chance to claim the honour for I reason that if it was not you then it must have been me. I too, had a word with one of the rats and told him that I did not like the mess.”

“Then it must be so,” Ot said quite relieved that it was not him, “For truly I have not said anything.”

“Well that’s settled then,” Ate said looking at Ot suspiciously before going off to claim the honour.

“Stupid mortal,” Etop said in a distant reality, “How they fall quickly to their pride again and again.”

“He has done no wrong,” Sicaï said, “If it’s there then take it that’s what honour is there for surely.”

“And then tomorrow,” Etop said, “When they wake up and find that they are still losing food. Where is the honour there then?”

“I never thought,” Sicaï said.

“It might work to our favour,” Aam said, “He will be more willing to kill Ot and so he will do it more quickly.”

“He will become a joke,” Etop said, “Then Ot maybe be king. What chance would he have then?”

“Ah,” Aam said upon realisation and then in the hope of trying to redeem himself, “But Ot does not want to be king.”

“He will have no choice,” Etop said, “Once he is elected it will be an insult to refuse.”

“Then we have problems,” Dah said, “And I think that Ate is too fickle to be of any real use.”

“He is going to need help then,” Etop said. “Someone will have to speak with him.”

“That is a dangerous road,” Gobcos said, “We can only see him in the Netherworld and we are not allowed to go there.”

“Circumstances dictate I’m afraid,” Etop said, “One of us will just have to be careful” and waited to see if there was any volunteers.

“I will go,” Sicaï said eventually seeing that no else had offered “It must be done.”

“You are a worthy son,” Etop said and the conversation finished.

Night time fell and Ate still revelling in his new found honour went on his journey to the Netherworld.

He saw Sicaï and said, “Now I am truly a king for you are a demon. Was it because I got rid of the rats?”

Sicaï left him in ignorance of his identity just saying, “It appears your kingship will soon be at an end.”

“What,” Ate said in surprise, “Never. They hold me in honour for getting rid of the rats.”

“Until the morning, then they will see the devastation that the rats have done and you will be held in ridicule.”

“But they have gone there will be no devastation.”

“They are hiding; they will only come out at night now. They will still make as much mess as before.”

“Then I am a fool, I am lost,” and then pleadingly, “Could you help me? I know that is what demons do.”

“I’ll try my best but I fear it calls for drastic action now.”

“I could just kill him and then the problem will go.”

“You will have to kill him but now is not the right time. You need to sort out the rat problem now you have received acclaim for it that must be done before anything. Once you have then kill Ot at the first opportunity for he could be a dangerous man.”

“That I have realised but that still leaves the matter of getting rid of the rats. They are too quick and too clever for us. I fear that I have an impossible task.”

“You are right the rat is much too clever for you but all is not lost.”

“It isn’t,” Ate said picking up.

“It has a natural enemy, one that is quicker and cleverer than it. Maybe if you saw it and asked it, it might come to your aid.”

“I’ll try. What is it?”

“A cat,” Sicai said and disappeared. He had been pulled back by an angry Etop, “What are you doing? That is not a secret to be divulged.”

“It is the only option that we have. Rats are too clever for men; they would never get rid of them.”

“You might end up seeing it domesticated another step in man’s evolution. Blast this trouble in the north; it’s taking too much interest.”

“A cat’s too proud to be domesticated. Man has nothing to offer it that it cannot get itself. If it came at all it would be for just one quick kill. It has no time for anything else.”

“I think he might be right,” Aam said coming to his aid, “The cat will not eat the rat so it still has to hunt.”

“Maybe,” Etop said, “Time will tell.”

Ot found his journey to the Netherworld a little more constructive.

“So how did you get on?” Dina said.

“Well I never managed to swim underwater.”

“Well you wouldn’t yet, you have not mastered how to swim.”

“Haven’t I? I thought I was getting quite good at it. I can swim pretty far now.”

“You have your confidence that is good and you have your strength too so it won’t take long. You need to swim in a different way to swim underwater that’s all.”

“Right and what is this way?”

“You must swim like a frog, have you seen how one swims?”

“A few times, I will ask it to teach me then.”

“Good and when you can swim like he can then you can go underwater.”

Ot thanked him as he disappeared.

Ate woke up with very mixed emotions. He told Cha all that had happened and much to his surprise she started to see him in a new light.

“So you must truly be the king,” she said giving him a look he had not seen in many a year, “You have indeed spoken to a demon.”

“Yes, just to find out that I am to be humiliated.”

“A small price to pay and it clears up a little matter that has been bothering us.”

“It does?”

“Now we know why he refused the offer, it was so that you would claim it. He must be in league with the rats. They want to discredit you as king so Ot might take your place.”

“He’s not that clever he could never think of anything like that.”

“Maybe but maybe, with all that treachery about I smell a rat.”

“And they did leave his cave alone. Yes, he is definitely a dangerous man.”

“Then you must go and see that cat the demon mentioned. Promise him anything do anything but make sure that it helps you.”

“And then Ot,” Ate said with a slight twinge of menace.

“First the rats.”

Ot had awoken before Ate and had gone to the lake at first light. He wanted to try and find the frog to ask it if it would teach him how to swim. It was a good hour before he finally found him.

“I was wondering if you could help me,” he said sheepishly because he did not really know him too well.

The frog stopped what he was doing and said, “I’ll try my best. Are you lost?”

“No, I was wondering if you would teach me how to swim?”

“Swim, that is not a word that you should know. It is a word to be used only by the animals of the water world. How did you come to know such a word?”

“It was told to me, when I was taught.”

“Then if you were taught you should already know,” the frog said in a triumphant manner believing that Ot was lying.

“I can only swim like a rat, I want to swim underwater.”

“A rat cannot swim where ever did you get that idea from?”

“It is true,” Ot said and as luck would have it Ren came swimming past, “See.”

The frog looked with horror as Ren swam up to them, “Good news Ot. We agreed to only come out at night. That should get him off your back.”

“Thanks,” Ot said.

“Who’s your friend?” Ren said.

“He is no friend of mine,” the frog said.

“Oh,” Ot said somewhat taken aback, “I’ve only just seen him so I don’t know. I was asking him to teach me to swim that’s all.”

“But you can swim,” Ren said, “Am I missing something here?”

“Well the answers no anyway,” the frog said.

“Friendly sort of fellow isn’t he,” Ren said to Ot.

“You come into my world to deprive me of my opportunity,” the frog said, “You think that I am going to be happy about it. Get back to your own land I say. There is barely enough for us as it is.”

“There is more than enough for all of us,” Ren said angrily, “It is just that your mind is too small to see it.”

“Never,” the frog said, “What do you know of our world, you only got here this morning. Go on, get off back. You are not welcome here. Coming here and taking our food. Who do you think you are?”

“Right, that’s it,” Ren said losing his temper, “You are bad to insult us in that way. You are worried about the food supply not going around well I am here to help you with that. Every time I find your eggs I will eat them so your offspring will never grow up to be

hungry. See how I treat you with kindness even after you disdain me?"

"Savages," the frog said.

"Don't waste your time with him Ot," Ren said getting ready to swim off, "He is not a pleasant person" and swam off.

"And you want me to teach you how to swim," the frog said with disdain, "I don't think so."

"No matter I have watched you a few times. I only need to see it once more."

"You will have a long wait then I will never show you how it's done."

"One day you will it is only a matter of time. I will keep a close eye on you until it happens though. You would save yourself a lot of bother if you told me. I might even ask Ren to leave your eggs alone."

"The word of Man is worth nothing and as for a rat I rate it even less."

"Well it will happen anyway I'm a patient man so it will not be an ordeal to wait. I offered you my friendship and yet you despise me. You're a very strange creature."

"Your friendship is as worthless as your word I despise you for what you are."

"Right," Ot said getting angry, "That's enough" and went over towards the frog who did no more than dive into the lake and swim off. Ot could now swim like a frog.

#### **Chapter 4**

Ate's encounter was just as fraught. There was a colony of cats not far from the cave so he thought he would try his luck there.

"Fellow animals," he said when they had all gathered to listen, "I have come to ask your help in getting rid of a mutual enemy. Will you help me to get rid of the rat's that plague my caves?"

"You want us to do a job that you cannot do yourself," a large black, one that Ate took to be the leader said, "And yet you come to us like you are doing us a favour."

"They are your bitterest enemies. Wouldn't you like the chance of getting rid of a few?"

"It is true they are our enemies," the black cat said, "But we have better things to do than to hunt them. We do not eat them so they are no good to us."

"Then I will give you food. Every rat that you kill I will give you its weight in meat."

"How many rats are we talking about?" the black cat said, his interest arisen.

"Countless. It should make for quite a kill."

"I will need to talk to our family about this," the black cat said and so Ate retired a short distance. After they had finished they called him over. "It has been decided," the black cat said, "We will come tonight and clear up your mess. So that you know that it is done we will leave all that we kill outside your entrance. Tomorrow we will come for our reward."

"Very well," Ate said pleased with himself.

"But mark these words well," the cat said, "You men are noted for your treachery; don't make the mistake of thinking it will work on us. We have cousins to the east, big cousins, that will come and take our revenge for us, you understand?"

"Yes," Ate said and joyfully headed for home and straight into an irate crowd.

"What is this?" Dag said, "You told us that you had got rid of the rats and yet our food is getting spoiled still."

"They are treacherous liars," Ate said, "They swore to me that they would go. But no matter for tonight they will fall."

“Yes sure,” Dag said.

“I stand on my word,” Ate said, “Tomorrow morning you will see,” and left them and went to Cha.

“It is done,” Ate said, “They will come tonight. I have their word.”

“Good, and the cost?”

“I promised the rats weight in meat, it was the only thing I could think of.”

“We have scant food to promise.”

“It was the only way,” Ate said once more.

“Never mind when they have finished their work we will not need them. Don’t give them any.”

“I fear that if might not be as simple as that. They have cousins much larger than they are. I have heard of their ferocity.”

“We’ll give them bad meat then, I mean you did not tell them that it would be good meat did you?”

“Good thinking,” Ate said with a smile and the scene continued.

Ot was down at the lakeside when all this was going on. He had mastered swimming like a frog and could even do it under the water. He had caught another fish and as it was cooking he just sat and watched.

“That’s a strange smell,” a voice said interrupting him. He turned around to see a large black cat. It was the one who had met with Ate earlier and was now out on his travels.

“It is a fish,” Ot said and offered the cat some of it. The cat took a bite and said, “That is good. Where did you get it?”

“From the water world, that is where it lives.”

“No wonder I’ve seen nothing like it. My name is Bob by the way.”

“Ot.”

“However did you manage to get it?”

“I swam.”

“I have heard talk of this would you teach me?”

“Sure,” Ot said and duly obliged. Now although the cat could swim, it found to its horror that it could not hunt and so it vowed that from then on it would hate water and have nothing to do with it. It was grateful to Ot though and parted on good terms.

Ot returned home and duly found himself in the Netherworld. “So you can swim like a frog now,” Dina said, “And underwater as well. You are turning into quite a little fish. I have a warning for you though. Ate has designs on your life. He thinks that you want his job and are dangerous to him. It might be a good idea to leave.”

“Where would I go?”

“You should be safe around the other side of the lake and you know enough to sustain yourself. In time I will unfold further secrets to help you. I caution you though Ot, when the rats disappear you will not be long behind them.”

“How long have I got then? I mean the rats will take some moving.”

“Well it’s lucky that they now have burrows that will save a few of them. A few days and no more I would say.”

“And the rats, whatever could do that to them?”

“A cat, it seems that Ate is getting outside help. He could not know of their hatred otherwise. I fear that the Masters might be now taking an interest in you.”

“Then it is surely only a matter of time,” Ot said as Dina disappeared.

Ate woke up the next morning to survey the carnage. There must have been 150 of them and it made for quite a pile. "Surely that must be all of them," he said quietly to himself before addressing the crowd. "Am I not a man of my word?" he said to Dag, "Surely there can be no more."

"It looks that way great king," Dag said duly humbled, "However did you manage it?"

"There are some things I cannot say. They are only for the ears of a king."

"Demons, I knew it, it was the only way. You are truly a king."

Ate was content to leave them in ignorance for he was a big believer in the mysticisms of kingship.

After they had gone two cats called to him from their hiding place. He went over and one of them said, "We have done what we can. They were all we could find."

"You have done well, you will be amply rewarded."

"We have done what you asked us to," the cat said, "Now you do what you said you would."

Ate gave them the bad meat and they took it in ignorance not knowing it was poor. He thought his problems were over but there were a few left to continue.

"He has caused us great carnage," Stima said, "And for that he must pay. It is indeed lucky we now have our own caves for without them we would be no more."

"It is that Ate," Bitia said, "It was him that brought in those cats. I seen him give them meat, it was bad meat from what I smelled but it was meat nevertheless."

"They don't like bad meat," Stima said, "What possible use would it be to them?"

"Maybe they did not know it to be bad," Bitia said, "Man is a treacherous animal after all."

"He must think that he has wiped us out then," Stima said, "He would not give them bad meat otherwise."

"Then that is to their cost," Bena said, "For the cats will not help him again."

"Then perhaps we ought to show him that we are still around," Stima said, "After all Ot must be in the clear now," and with that and in daylight the taunting started once more. It was surprising how many rats were actually saved by the burrows. 50 came out and to anyone watching it did look like a plague. They ran around the caves making as much mess as they could and causing as much a disturbance as they could. They left Ot's cave alone though out of the respect they had for Ren. After they had finished and it had all died down the clan came out and held a meeting. Ate had quite a lot of explaining to do and much to his horror had to tell the truth about it being the cats and not demons.

"Then you must go back to the cats," Dag said, "And tell them to come and finish the job they have already killed enough rats for us to know that they are not invincible. I'm sure that another night will see the rats gone once and for all. It is not a bad thing. In fact it means that we have panicked them into their rashness."

Ate had neglected to tell them about the meat being bad so he was in a bit of a predicament. He went back to Cha for mutual recriminations and to try and see if they could come up with something.

"You and your bad meat," he snapped, "Now I have to go back to them and ask for their help. No chance of that."

"Well you said that they would all be killed, couldn't you just tell them it was a mistake?"

"They would never believe me. They seem to have a very low opinion of Man for some

reason.”

“Offer them more meat, good meat this time. That’s the only thing I can think of.”

It was a dejected Ate that made his way back to the colony.

Ot too had got up fairly early. He went down to the lake for he had it in mind that he would make himself a boat. He found a suitable tree and trimmed it down to size. He stripped the bark off and started to hollow it. He spent the whole day on it and still never had it finished. He went home tired but happy to know that it would be finished the next day.

Ate’s arrival at the colony brought anger from the cats. “You dare mock us with bad meat,” Bob said, “I have warned you about our cousins in the east.”

“Bad meat,” Ate said pleading ignorance, “I am not aware of this, surely there must be some mistake.”

“Yes but we never made it.”

“Let me see the meat,” Ate said and it was brought before him. “This is rancid,” he said, “It is not fit to be eaten.”

“My thoughts exactly an insult to say otherwise and also an insult to offer as payment.”

“I agree. I don’t quite know what is happening here but I will make my promise good.”

“See that you do, but not with bad meat.”

“So you will come tonight and continue where you left off? For there are still rats about.”

“That is as it should be, you did not think that we would kill them all did you?”

“Well yes, that was what you said anyway.”

“Do you really think that we would trust you that much? I mean what would happen if we did the job for you and then got paid with bad meat. You men are not to be trusted.”

“Oh, “Ate said well and truly rumbled.

“No matter, you return before nightfall with good meat and we will spend another night hunting.”

“Fair enough,” Ate said thinking it all sorted.

“But tomorrow we don’t want meat, we want some variety.”

“Sorry?”

“For every rat we catch we want a fish. Your meat is seldom fresh anyway.”

“A fish, where am I going to get a fish from?”

“From the water world like Ot does. I have seen and tasted one so I know that they exist.”

“He caught it by good fortune,” Ate said thinking back to the first one, “He may never catch another.”

“Liar, he swam out and got one. He told me himself. What treacherous animals you men are. You want me to help you yet you hide your secrets from me.”

“I know nothing about what you speak but I promise that I will find out about this fish.”

“And when you do and accept our terms we will get rid of those rats for you but tonight we eat with good meat so make it so.”

Seeing no other choice Ate replaced the meat and then went straight round to Ot. Ot thought that he had come to kill him so it was with quite a relief he listened to Ate’s problem. After Ate had finished Ot thought awhile before saying, “Though it is true that I have learned to take fish from the water world it is only a very few. There is no way that I could get enough fish to do that besides I don’t mind the rats.”

“Yes and I wouldn’t say that, that has gone by unnoticed. People are beginning to think that you are in league with them. They are saying that you prefer them to your fellow

man.”

“What, does it have to be one or the other?”

“It does now, they have declared war.”

“Then I must help you but as I’ve said I cannot catch enough fish so I don’t know how good I’ll be.”

“You must teach us,” Ate said, “Tomorrow at first light.” Ot reluctantly agreed.

The night saw him back with Dina who was not too pleased at all. “You have done it now Ot,” he said by way of greeting, “Once you tell Ate then the Masters will find out.”

“I had no choice,” Ot said sadly, “I was forced into it. What else could I do?”

“You should not have given that cat the fish but no matter. I can save you from Ate but when it comes to the Masters of Wisdom there is nothing I can do.”

“I will have to take my chances but I am grateful of any help with Ate.”

“Fair enough, you must have Shi ready to leave first thing in the morning.”

“That might be a problem but I think I can persuade her.”

“Well if not you might have to leave her. Would you be ready to do that?”

“If I must though I would rather not hopefully it will not come to that.”

“Hopefully, anyway you must teach Ate everything that I have taught you. That should pacify him enough to give you enough time to get away.”

“He’ll never catch enough fish though. I don’t think that he would be pacified until he does.”

“He won’t catch many with the methods I’ve told you,” Dina admitted, “They are not very efficient.”

“You mean there are other methods? And are these much better?”

“Yes, you could end up with a lot of fish from these.”

“Then will you teach me. I am sure that will pacify him and then I’ll be safe.”

“The Masters would not like it.”

“They have condemned me already, what else have I to lose?”

“Very well,” Dina said and went on to tell Ot how to make and cast nets. When he had finished he told Ot that he could use the boat he was making to cast the net from and then wished him well before disappearing. Ot woke up and told Shi about his plan. She agreed with him so got ready and arranged to meet him later. Ot left the cave and was soon walking to the lake with Ate. He first taught him how to fish with the spear and then ride the log. After he had done that Ot said, “You mean to kill me don’t you?” Ate was somewhat taken aback by that and so said nothing. “You think that I am a danger to you but I will prove to you that I am a friend. I will tell you all that I know so you will know what I know. If I promise to go and never return will you promise not to follow?”

Ate thought awhile before he said, “I will give you my word.”

“That is good enough for me,” Ot said and then taught him how to swim. He took to it very quickly and could soon swim both like the rat and the frog. Next they made nets and Ot showed him how to cast.

Finally they finished the boat and went out into the middle and caught a large net full.

With all his wisdom imparted Ot said his goodbye and nothing was heard of him again.

The story did not finish there though for life goes on and retribution has to be paid.

Ate came back laden with both fish and knowledge. He took the credit for all of Ot’s secrets and became a man of high renown. The cats got their fish and went back on the hunt though the rats were more canny and harder to catch. They were happy with the fish



and so agreed to move in with man and keep a better eye on the rats. If any man gave them bad meat then they would just find another cave for they had plenty to choose from. They did suffer at the hands of the Masters though for they should not have taken the fish. Half were turned into fish and made to live in the water world to compensate for what had been lost and the Masters thought that a fitting punishment so left it at that. Ot though, for him they saved their venom. With poetic irony they turned him into an otter and as that he lived out the rest of his days.

### 3. Tigress' Tale

Sometimes in life the flint hits the stone and two bright sparks occur. When Ot came into being another spark landed to the north and she was called Ti. Now our more discerning readers will say that, that is the domain of the clan Dit so her name must be Ti Dit and logically speaking that would follow but sometimes life is not logical. Gress and Dit swapped places for each preferred the other land to his own and so Ti was actually of the clan Gress (and the clan names would have spelt,, 'Congressional help hinders prod it' which is not really the message I wanted to get across) his granddaughter in fact.

Ti loved to hunt and could hunt as good as any man. Tall in stature she was as strong as any man and in fact superior to quite a few. The women of the clan Gress were not allowed to hunt but Ti was the King's sister and so had special privileges. Ti would hunt every day and it was not many days that she came home empty handed. It is on one of those days that our tale begins. Ti was out in the undergrowth looking for prey when she was disturbed by a large nut that sailed past her head. She looked up to see that it was the monkey up to his usual tricks. Another one came over and then another. She hated the monkey but knew that she could never catch him .He knew how to use the trees and she did not and in the place she hunted that was a distinct advantage. He was far too agile for her spear and she knew that if she ever threw it and missed she would never get it back. "You will not kill today she man," the monkey said, "For I will follow you and scare off all your prey."

"I have to live," Ti said,"To do that I have to eat."

"Fruit was good enough for your ancestors and it's good enough for me. Why should some animal lose its life because you don't like eating fruit?"

"I can't just eat fruit I need strength."

"Then eat them nuts I threw you, who said that you can't have variety."

Ti tried to get away from him but he was a lot quicker than her. He followed her all day and if any animal looked like getting too close he would warn them off. Ti went home empty handed and in poor spirits.

"Waste of time that was," she said,"And a long way to travel for it."

"No good?" her mate Bran said.

"What do you think," She said angrily, "That monkey followed me around again I could get near nothing. Why does he do it?"

"Well he is the king of the old order I guess he doesn't like newcomers."

"I was born here as was my father before me. I am not a new comer."

"To him you are, we have only been here two generations that is nothing compared to him. Look how much evolved he is for a start. He can climb trees and live in the sky we have to live in caves and travel long distances to hunt. I don't know what Gress was thinking of, wanting to come here."

"Well we are here now so I guess we have to make the best of it."

"Maybe you could talk to him tell him that you need to eat to live."

"Tried it he just said that fruit was good enough for him so it should be good enough for me."

"No good there then," Bran said and the conversation finished.

Night time saw Ti enter the Netherworld and meeting up with an elderly man. "Who are you?" She said without fear, "What are you doing here?"

"I am Dryda the air element," the old man said, "I have come to help you make the best

of your situation.”

“Sorry?” Ti said for she had forgotten she had said that.

“You have expressed an interest to enter my world,” Dryda said elaborating.

“What?” Ti said still confused.

“You want to know how to climb trees,” Dryda said elaborating some more.

“Do I?” Ti said.

“It will help you get those nuts and it will give you entrance into my world,” with that the scene changed and they were back in the jungle. The old man straddled the tree and with surprising agility climbed to the first branch “From here it is simple,” he shouted down “Come up and join me.”

Ti tried and was soon up there with him. “Yes,” She said, “That was pretty easy. And I can now jump from tree to tree like the monkey.”

“I wouldn’t try that you weigh a lot more than a monkey. I should not think that many branches would be able to take the weight.”

“Then it is no good to me,” Ti said with more than a hint of disappointment.

“It can help you to get nuts, you used to eat nuts not that long ago.”

“Well I suppose there is that,” Ti said not persuaded.

“You want to hunt in my land don’t you? I’m afraid that’s not possible.”

“The great hawk does it I have seen him myself.”

“But he is from our world; the worlds cannot collide.”

“You told me how to climb trees though isn’t that collision?”

“Nuts have been in your diet so this is nothing new. You can climb one tree at a time so it is very limited access.”

“Then I can’t hunt there anyway so it is a bit pointless.”

“You can but only from your land and maybe the tree that you have climbed.”

“And will you tell me?”

“I will but on one condition.”

“Anything.”

“You must never take credit for anything I tell you. Once you do your days are numbered.”

“Why is that then?”

“It will get back to the Masters and they will destroy you. I can say no more,” and disappeared.

Ti woke up in a very happy mood. She knew that she could not take the credit for women were not allowed to take the credit for anything so there would be no chance of her coming to grief. She would soon learn how to hunt in the air world and this filled her full of excitement. She took Bran into the jungle and showed him how to climb a tree.

“That was amazing,” he said once he had come down, “However did you learn that?”

“The monkey showed it to me,” she lied, “Said that if I wasn’t content with fruit I could get nuts.”

“Yesterday? You never mentioned it.”

“I was too angry, I thought it an insult but thinking about it I guess it wasn’t.”

“Well it’s a good thing to know.”

“Maybe but I can tell no one so they will never know.”

“Then I will tell them for a secret like this cannot remain so,” and so man learned how to climb trees.

“What is this?” a voice was heard in a dimension far away. It was Etop and he was angry, “Man is climbing trees.”

“It is so he can get to the nuts,” Siscail said, “He has eaten nuts before so it has a precedence.”

“Yes,” Etop said, “But from the ground. Man is not supposed to climb. Where ever did he learn?”

“From the monkey I’ll bet,” Siscail said.

“He would never tell him that,” Etop said, “They are enemies.”

“He would only have to watch him,” Siscail said, “Hide somewhere out of sight.”

“Maybe,” Etop said not convinced, “I want you to keep an eye on Bran. See if he uncovers further secrets.”

“By your command,” Siscail said and the matter ended there.

Now as luck would have it later that day after Bran had left her Ti chanced upon the monkey and it was asleep. She quietly climbed the tree and grabbed him unaware. The monkey’s arrogance disappeared as he said, “Please don’t kill me.”

“You drive off my prey, you make it that I cannot live. What else am I supposed to do?”

“Spare me and I will promise that I will not do it again.”

“Your promises are not valid.”

“No,” the monkey protested, “I am not a man. My promise is my life.”

“Then I already have it.”

“I can teach you how to shelter here so you don’t have to travel far to hunt.”

“If I let you go will you promise to show me how to make shelter?” Ti said and the monkey promised.

He showed her how to interlink great leaves and make them watertight and even helped Ti to collect them from the trees. Once done Ti let him go as she had promised and sat inside the fabrication for it had just started to rain. The monkey came back for shelter and they got talking.

“So what makes you want to eat meat,” the monkey said, “I think that it’s disgusting.”

“It tastes nice when it’s blessed.”

“I would have to be pretty desperate, that would never happen here though.”

“Here,” Ti said in surprise, “Hardly any meat and no fruit that I’ve seen. We barely survive.”

“You could gorge yourself here and not make an impression.”

“I can’t see anything,” Ti said as the rain stopped.

“You just don’t know where to look.”

“Will you teach me?”

“Only if you make me a promise.”

“Anything.”

“That you will never try and hunt me again. With what I tell you, you will live lavishly and never need to hunt.”

“Fair enough,” Ti said and her education began. The monkey told her to pull up some vegetation and then eat its roots. “See how sweet it is?” the monkey said.

“Very, what’s it called?”

“I don’t know we do not give things names. I mean it is not like it is going to answer us.”

“Fair enough,” Ti said seeing his logic. The monkey showed her other flora and more importantly ones she should avoid He then went on to show her which fruit was safe and

which was not. By the time she had finished she knew of thirty different foodstuffs for the monkey had imparted all that he knew.

Reluctant for the secret to remain though she decided that she would get someone to claim the credit and as it was such a major secret it would have to be two. The first one that came into her mind was her nephew Cos so she went back and quickly found him. She took him to the fabrication and showed it to him, "See what I found when I was out on the hunt."

"It's unusual," Cos said, "What is it?"

"I don't know but see how it's dry inside."

"We need not live in the caves any more," Cos said as if inspired, "It will save us a lot of journey."

"You think?"

"Yes, but who made it? Someone must live here."

"The monkey probably, who knows? We just have to copy it anyway."

"True," Cos said and walked back to tell everybody what he had found.

"More trouble," Etop said, "They can now make shelters."

"It was inevitable," Gobcos said.

"A hundred cycles from now," Etop said, "No, I see the work of a demon."

"Well he is to be king one day," Gobcos said.

"Then keep an eye on him," Etop said, "Tell me if he finds anything else."

"By your command," Gobcos said.

The clan of Gress took to the jungle and settled quite comfortably. Cos was from then on called 'the wise' and this brought jealousy between him and his father Non so Ti told him all that the monkey had told her and he became Non 'The Wiser'. This meant that he too fell under the Masters constant gaze giving Sihai something to do.

Now the night that Ti had made her promise to the monkey she went back to the Nether World expecting her instruction to continue. She was to be disappointed.

"I cannot teach you," Dryda said, "If I did then you would surely break a promise."

"What promise and to who?"

"To the monkey, you made a promise that you would never hunt him."

"What has that got to do with it?"

"It's the only thing that you can hunt in my world. If I teach you how long before you renege?"

"I'll never renege besides there are other things, I've seen birds."

"Too small to be of value, no, a promise is a promise and should be upheld at all times."

"And what about your promise to me, you promised to teach me to hunt."

"I didn't promise, I only said."

"That's splitting hairs," Ti said and left Dryda thinking. Eventually Dryda said, "I cannot teach you how to hunt in the air for I know you will break your promise. Now as to my promise to you, I will have to renege. To compensate I suggest an alternative."

"Go on," Ti said not really interested but seeing she had no real alternative.

"To make it that you will not need to hunt birds I will tell of a plan."

"Go on."

"There is a colony of hens near where you live, they will come and live with you if you offer them protection."

"You think so. I can't see it working for we are the only ones that hunt them."

“Then from yourself, tell them that it is inevitable that they will grow old and then and only then will you eat them.”

“That’s a long time to wait.”

“Well in the meantime you can have their eggs. Just leave them enough to keep the colony going. They lay too many, they will understand,” and disappeared.

Ti woke up to a busy day and carried on with her life. As mentioned the clan moved and were settled and acclimatised within a week. The tales pick up after the rivalry between Cos and Non was settled and when Ti was out hunting. She had not told the others about the plan for she did not like the taste of hen. As luck decreed though that was what she found. She was with her cousin Sul at the time and they had cornered one and were going in for the kill.

“Please spare me,” the hen said, “I’ll do anything you want.”

Ti remembering the old man said, “You will come and live with us.”

“What?” both Sul and the hen said together.

“Why not,” Ti said to Sul, “We need not hunt again.”

“What,” the hen said, “You mean to hold me captive until you are ready to eat me. Kill me now and have done with it.”

“You come and live with us and we will promise you our protection. We will wait until you are old and good for nothing before we do anything else.”

“That maybe years,” Sul said, “And what are we going to do in the meantime. How are we going to feed them for a start?”

“You won’t need to feed us,” the hen said warming to the idea, “We eat what’s around us.”

“It’s still a long wait,” Sul said.

“What about this then,” Ti said and turned to the hen, “You have many children, too many I’ll bet.”

“Yes,” the hen said, “You are not suggesting eating my children. The monkey was right, you are barbarians.”

“Not your children give us eggs. We will not take them all so your kind can continue to live on.”

The hen thought awhile before saying, “Well a lot of them die young because they are not protected. I will see our queen and ask her. I think you have a good idea.”

“You like it, good. Now if I let you go will you promise to try your best to make it happen?”

“I will,” the hen said.

“One more thing this idea came from this man and not me if anyone asks.”

“Sure,” the hen said and ran quickly off.

“What did you want to get me blamed for?” Sul said.

“Credited, you could be a man of honour after this. An endless supply of eggs, quite an achievement.”

“Really, I never thought.”

They went back to their new complex and Ti had another uneventful night in the Netherworld. She had not seen the man since he had told her about the birds so it was expected.

The following day much to the rest of the clans surprise the hens moved in and this caused more eruptions for Etop. “Domesticating fowl,” he said, “It’s all happening too

quickly.”

“I suppose it was bound to,” Finites said, “It’s just natural progression.”

“I know that,” Etop said, “It’s the speed that it’s happening. That would not have happened this quickly. We are losing generations.”

“It’s coming through different people though,” Finites said, “Surely if there was interference it would be to only one person.”

“One of them will slip up,” Etop said, “It will only take one,” and then to Finites, “Keep an eye on Sul. Tell me if anything else occurs.”

“By your command,” Finites said.

## **Chapter 2**

Time past by and the clan of Gress started to get lethargic. With what the monkey had revealed they lived well and prospered. The hunter lost his prestige for he was now not needed and one by one they took to becoming gatherers and resentment grew accordingly. The women resented the men for not taking their share of the survival work load. The men resented the women for making them and Ti; well she just resented the boredom of it all. Her hunting days were nearly over. Hens were now protected so they proved little sport. The deer was never an option for it was too fleet of foot and Ti’s spear no match for it. Most of the larger animals had just disappeared. And what does a hunter do when it runs out of prey. He starts to pray. “Oh Great Earth Mother, sustainer of life, give unto your child the fruit of your loins,” and with that Dryda appeared.

“How ever did you do that?” he said shocked to have been summoned.

“I don’t know it just came out.”

“You know that you will be cursed for that, it was protected.”

“A curse,” Ti said getting slightly frightened. Although at that time man did not have the power to curse Ti did know what a curse was. It was a thing administered by a demon to anyone that transgressed nature through the negative power of magick.

“You do not use the Greater Nature’s power that is the domain of Destiny alone. You will be turned against your mate so that the only time you get on will be at the time of procreation.”

“Fair enough so what happens now?”

“Now, well now you have summoned me, what do you want?”

“Er, I was just bored and it came into my head,” she thought awhile before saying, “Now I know that you cannot show me how to hunt in your world.”

“It is more than my life’s worth,” Dryda said knowing that she could force him to while he was under her spell.

“So instead could you show me how to hunt the deer?”

“Yes” Dryda said relieved, “I could do that. Your lesson will begin tonight.”

“Could you tell me more about that magick thing, it got me interested.”

“I must,” Dryda said though he did not want to, he was compelled to. Ti could have asked for a third thing but she was unaware that she had the power.

“Then I will see you tonight,” Ti said not knowing that she was releasing him from her spell. Dryda disappeared and Ti went the short distance back in a happy mood for she would soon be hunting deer. The mood quickly changed when she got back though.

“Where have you been?” it was Bran and he was not very happy, “You know I’m getting really vexed about being the woman around here. I’m the one that goes out and fetches

the roots. That should be your job. How do you think it feels to work with the women? Work, oh sorry, that must be a word unfamiliar with you.”

“I am the King’s sister,” Ti said in shock. She had not expected the curse to work so quickly.

“What does that mean? It’s not worth anything.”

“How dare you, you keep my family out of it. You should count yourself lucky that you are involved with us. That is more honour than you are worth.”

“No honour to me they say I am a kept man.”

“Well you know what you can do. You are only good for one thing anyway.”

Bran stormed off muttering under his breath, “If I had any kids by you I would kill them. Some mother you would make.”

Ti was still fairly angry when she journeyed to the Netherworld.

“Men,” She said, “Who needs them. They are only good for one thing anyway.”

“I see the curse has started,” Dryda said, “Anyway we will resume your instruction when you are ready.”

“Sorry about that. So you were going to teach me how to hunt the deer then.”

“Yes the deer. Now to hunt the deer you will need to increase your killing range. To do that you will need something better than the cumbersome spear.”

“Increase the killing range?” Ti repeated.

“Yes the distance you need to be away from your prey before you can kill it. With the density of the jungle that would be barely a spear length at present,” with that a bow and some arrows appeared, “This you’ll find a lot better.”

Ti studied it awhile and tried it out, “I can see what you mean about increasing the distance but I don’t think it will be strong enough to kill a deer. I would have to hit it quite a few times to bring it down.”

“You have many arrows but I hear what you say, that should help you with smaller prey. Get used to its workings and learn how to make it. When you have mastered it I will show you some more,” and disappeared.

Ti woke up and remembering the design went into the jungle and cut a piece of wood the same size.

She sprung it with twine and soon had a bow. Next she cut some smaller lengths of wood and sharpened one end of each one and then fitted some hen feathers on the other end. She practised for a while and got quite good with her aim before leaving it out in the open and hiding nearby. After a short while her uncle Din came by and found them. He studied them awhile and guessing how they worked tried them out. The clan of Gress now had bow and arrows.

Etop watched with horror as they practised their art, “Another leap,” he said to Sicaï, “Where is it all coming from?”

“Do you want me to keep an eye on him?” Sicaï said.

“No,” Etop said, “You are needed in the west. How are we expected to keep an eye on this mess?” and thought awhile before saying “That Bran has done nothing of note since he climbed that tree. He must have just seen the monkey do it. I will tell Sicaï to keep an eye on Din.”

“By your command,” Sicaï said.

Ti in the meantime had got back into conversation with the monkey.

“Was I not right?” he said, “More than enough food for everyone. See how easy life has



become.”

“Too easy I’m getting bored.”

“Are you seriously trying to tell me that you preferred it like it was?” the monkey said in surprise “All that struggling.”

“Well maybe not but it now seems that there is nothing happening.”

“Enjoy it you just have a little restlessness that’s all. It will soon pass.”

“I need to be hunting,” Ti said getting to the truth of the matter, “I can’t be doing nothing it tears me apart.”

“Oh hunting, you don’t need it now. There is plenty of food without killing.”

“It’s not the kill it’s the thrill of the chase.”

“You have been truly tainted but if it’s the thrill that you seek surely you don’t get that much from a hen?”

“I can’t touch them now but no you are right there is not much sport in hunting.”

“That is because you are not being tested; you need a more worthy adversary. It’s not like the hen can turn and kill you.”

“Well true but there is nothing around here capable. I have been brought up on how Erju killed the two headed bear unarmed. How can I compete with that?”

“Two headed bear?” the monkey said in surprise though putting it down to man’s vivid imagination said, “No matter. But if it is a test you are after I might have the answer.”

“You might,” Ti said her interest picking up.

“It is a remnant from the old world, long forgotten. It lived before the beginning of things.”

“Nothing lived before the beginning of things that’s a well known fact.”

“There have been other beginnings; many Grand Designs have been tried before this one. If Creation cannot achieve perfection with what it has at hand it starts again.”

Not understanding and not wanting to appear foolish for not Ti just said, “So this monster, tell me about it.”

“It is a great winged lizard, its very breath could poison you. It was the master from the last design but it fell from grace because of its appetite for destruction. You wanted to know where all the large game has gone. It seems you have a competitor.”

“A very efficient one,” Ti said and thought awhile before saying, “Do the hens know of the creature?”

“It is only man that does not, why do you ask?”

“I was just wondering why they should be so keen to come under our protection.”

“You have offered them protection from the creature. That sounds like a direct attack on its authority.”

“I should have guessed something was wrong, so what happens now?”

“Well I don’t know about you hunting it, it seems that it may be hunting you.”

“Tell me about this creature so I might know what to expect.”

“Death, your pointed stick is no match for it. I will tell you about it though but I would advise you to leave the jungle.”

“But it is our home we have nowhere else.”

“Fair enough, this creature could be ten paces away and yet you would not see it.”

“So it’s pretty small then,” Ti said with a hint of relief.

“On the contrary, when it stands up tall it must be four times the size of you.”

“How can that be?” Ti said in both shock and surprise.

“Its colour is the colour of the jungle. You could be right next to it and not know it.”

“Oh, and its breath can kill.”

“Yes, it has claw nails as big as your hand too and its teeth can cut through trees.”

“How is it that we have never seen it? Surely a creature that size would make its presence felt.”

“Normally it would shun man, besides with the creature by the time you have saw it, it would be too late.”

“So why would it shun us? If as you say we are no match for it, what possible fear has it?”

“Fear that is not a word that it knows. No it is just biding its time.”

“Why, for what?”

“Until man falls out of favour, it is a safeguard.”

“You mean that it was put here to destroy us.”

“Should you prove unworthy, then the old master will take over. It is quite a foe.”

“I think that those hens have proved a mixed blessing. I did not realise that they brought with them trouble.”

“Nothing is ever easy but now you can climb trees you have an advantage. You can see a lot better from up in the trees.”

“Maybe but how would I kill it?”

“It is indestructible, maybe instead of trying to you might come to terms.”

“I doubt it, we have nothing to offer.”

“Then you are lost,” the monkey said and the conversation ended. Ti went back to her dwellings to find that the expected joy of her discovery had been replaced with panic.

“Have you seen Eto?” Cos said, “She hasn’t come back yet. She was out collecting food with the other women and went off on her own somewhere.”

“No sorry, have you sent anyone out looking for her?”

“Yes many some have returned and some are still out. I hope that nothing has happened to her. No, nothing could, not here.”

Ti wished him luck and then went over to the hen she had first trapped.

“It appears you bring death with you.”

“Sorry?” the hen said.

“You never mentioned that you had other predators. I have heard stories of a large winged lizard.”

“Oh. Yes it is true. But you did offer us your protection.”

“In ignorance, but the damage is done now. I want you to tell me all that you know about it.”

“I know very little for no one has returned who saw it. We only know it exists by the fact we lose family. They say it has existed forever. I did not even know that it was a winged lizard until you told me.”

“And now it knows that you are under our protection. I would not stray too far though for I’m guessing that your actions have displeased it.”

“I’ll bare that in mind,” the hen said and the conversation finished. The search parties returned later that day. Not only had they not found Eto they had also lost Crag, one of their finest hunters. It was a very confused Non that chaired a clan meeting. “We have lost two of our kin. There is something suspicious going on. This has not happened before, any suggestions?”

“Maybe they have ran off together,” Din said, “It is well known they have love light between them.”

“Never,” Cos said, “She was my mate not his. You insult me even by suggesting it.”

“I mean no offence nephew,” Din said knowing that Cos would one day be king, “But I am afraid that it is with truth I speak.”

“I have seen it myself,” Non said, “I am afraid that my brother is right,” and the clan accepted it as truth. Ti was not allowed to attend the meeting and even if she had been she could not have mentioned the creature for it would have been dismissed as mere woman’s fantasy.

Ti journey to the Netherworld proved more enlightening. She was back in the jungle with Dryda, “I’m afraid that your advice about the hens might have brought about our downfall” Ti said without greeting.

“Really? Why is that?”

“It appears we have another enemy, one that we did not even know about.”

“Well he’s not from my world for I don’t know it.”

“It has wings doesn’t that make it your world.”

“There is no bird that could cause your downfall; you are too powerful for them.”

“A lizard not a bird.”

“A lizard with wings,” Dryda said and thought awhile before turning quite pale and saying, “You mean a dragon.”

“If that is what you call it, I have heard that it is an ardent foe.”

“It is virtually indestructible I fear that you have a terrible enemy there. One I cannot help you with.”

“What, you mean to lead us to destruction for we are no match for it.”

“Nothing is a match for it, it is a creature evolved to destroy. It was put in place in case man should fall.”

“The monkey told me that and something about it being from a previous world.”

“Yes it is a remnant from the past. It is from the age of the reptile when great giants roamed the land.”

“This is all pretty new to me. The monkey said that there were many beginnings when I only thought there was one.”

“There were many beginnings but it was all part of the same thing you needed to get through them to achieve perfection.”

“Will you tell me of them so I might know?”

“It can do no harm I suppose. It’s all about refinement.”

“Refinement?” Ti repeated.

“Yes, the first age was the age of chaos. It was not life for land could not sustain it. It was the beginning of Creation though for it was the birth of the Earth Mother. She came to be when all the chaos had settled. The second age saw the start of her growth. This was the age of the water world for life began in the sea. Her skin was the land and it wrinkled and shaped with age. She grew hair and vegetation came to be. It purified the poisonous air so that we might breathe though that took countless cycles. We had to come from the sea because the land was not ready for us so it was more of a time of waiting. The third age saw the age of the reptile. Vegetation had grown too big for it lived on the poison and life was ready to leave the water world. Giant reptiles evolved to keep it in trim and others to keep them in trim. The air grew purer and so they had served their purpose and were no

longer needed. The dragon was created to help them on their way. The fourth age came to be, the age of the mammal. These fed on the eggs of the lizards, the final death blow.”

“And that is where we are now?”

“No, this is the fifth and final age. It is the time of man. It was won by Phin for his humility. The Earth Mother reasoned that man might not always be humble though. She kept the dragon as a safe guard in case Man fell to his foolish pride.”

“And should that happen?”

“She would just release the dragon and then mutate once again and a new age will begin.”

“So this might not be the final age.”

“It will be Man’s,” Dryda said and disappeared.

### **Chapter 3**

Ti woke up to a new day. Thoughts of the dragon came to her mind and how useless she would be against it. She went outside and much to her horror it had come a visiting. It was huge she had never seen the like of it before. It was out of this world. In fact it was that far out of her range of reality that the hairs on the back of her neck rose in fright? It stood defiantly in the clearing and looked around the clan with contempt. "Any of you vermin the leader of the pack?" it spat out.

Nervously Non stepped forward and said, “I am Non. Who are you and what do you want with the clan Gress?”

“My name is too worthy for your lips,” the dragon said, “I have not come here in friendship. You have something that belongs to me.”

“We have? I am sure there has been some mistake.”

“By you, you have stole my hens and denied me of a chance of survival.”

“Your hens I did not realise.”

“No matter, I now have a taste for human flesh,” the clan all stepped back in horror, “I have been thinking that your idea of keeping the hens until you are ready to eat them is a good idea,” the dragon continued, “With that in mind I will come and take one of you every quarter of a Moon. You will have it ready for me when I come otherwise I will take you all. You dared to think that you could challenge my authority and get away with it.”

“You are welcome to have the hens back,” Non said not really knowing what else to say. “I have a taste for human flesh now. I will come the day after tomorrow,” and turned and left.

After he had gone Non said, “What are we to do? Whoever was it that brought those hens in? They have a lot to answer for.”

“It was Sul,” Cos said, “He told me himself.”

Sul stepped forward and said, “It was me.”

“The dragon has two days before he comes back,” Non said, “You will take our best hunters and make sure that he doesn’t come back.”

“I will try but it looks quite a formidable foe.”

“Our spears will soon finish it, it looks too big to be agile.”

“We will find out where it sleeps then we will finish it.”

“Good, it is not an honourable thing to pay tribute to an animal. It has not happened since the time of Erju. The clan of Gress will not be tainted with the stigma of being the first” Sul along with ten of the clan’s best hunters took the journey leaving shortly afterwards

in the hope of trailing it to its lair. Ti was not allowed to join so instead she spent her time making another bow and some more arrows. Night time saw her meeting with Dryda in the jungle. “So the bow and arrow then,” he said without greeting, “Have you mastered it yet?”

“I think so.”

“Good, now the bow and arrow is an agile weapon but it needs something to enlarge its killing potential,” and pulled some vegetation from the ground, “Cut this up and then soak it in water and then dip the arrow heads in it before firing. You will find that the prey soon falls.”

“And will it work with the dragon?”

“No, if anything it will grow stronger because of it.”

“Then I fear these lessons are pointless I don’t think that we will be around for that long.”

“Ah, the dragon and his tribute,” Dryda said and thought awhile before saying, “There is a way. I shouldn’t really tell you though for if you kill the dragon you will have a heavy penalty to pay.”

“I would be dead otherwise, could anything be worse?”

“You’ll be surprised,” Dryda said and walked over to a Lotus Blossom. He took the leaves off and said, “This is the only thing that will kill it. This is poison to the dragon just as that other mix is poison to the deer.”

“I will remember that,” Ti said and Dryda disappeared.

Ti woke up and joined the crowd awaiting the hunters expected return. She took time out to show Bran the poisonous plant for the Moon was getting fuller and they were getting friendlier.

“So it’s Bran this time,” Etop said, “Who was watching him?”

“No one,” Gobcos said, “You told us not to.”

“This is getting too much,” Etop said, “We cannot be everywhere.”

Sul and his intrepid crew left the complex in good health. Their first night went quickly for they were still in good cheer. Sure it was big Sul reasoned but it meant more honour. A two headed bear might have looked quite awesome but in comparison, well there wasn’t any. He had followed Non’s logic that as it was so big it must be cumbersome and knew that with his ten friends and sharp spears they would make quick work out of it. Yes his name would definitely live on and enhance the clan’s reputation. His friends were of much the same mind for they saw it as a big adventure. They meant to get it while it slept but their stories would not say that. Each one knew that their names would never be forgotten and knowing that they walked with pride. There was their champion **Sel** name after some king of no distinction, his two brothers **Frih** and **Teo**, men of remarkable courage and superhuman strength. Their cousins **Us** and **Nes**, remarkable trackers held in high esteem. There was **Sis** and **Itso**, two brothers who had proved themselves on many occasions, **Wnr** who could throw the spear further than any of the clan. **Ew** the fastest runner and finally **Ard** the sure footed. With these beside him Sul felt confident and why shouldn’t he, no animal in Creation could stand up to these men They easily picked up the dragons trail for it left many signs of disturbance in its wake. As they walked Sel said “Soon we will be avenged. Crag was like a brother to me.”

“So you don’t think that he ran off with Eto?” his brother Frih said.

“At first,” Sel said, “I think that there was something going on between them.”

“Don’t let Cos hear you say that,” Us said, “He won’t be pleased.”

“If he had anything about him he would be here with us,” Sel said, “Anyway at first I did but then. . . .”

Now earlier I said that no animal in Creation could with stand these men, well the dragon is not from the land of Creation. It comes from the land of symbols which is a much more vibrant reality. It is life on a higher vibration and so it moves at a faster speed, a lot faster speed. It had tracked on ahead and then doubled back to lie in wait, and then it struck

.Before Sel could get any further the top of his head was spliced by a dragon’s claw.

“What the,” was as far as Frigh got before he fell to the dragons breath. He was not alone though for Us was caught with the same gasp. The hunters flank was decimated and they did not even know it for the rest were out of earshot. The main party of six following the two trackers were unaware that their retreat was no longer covered and that far engrossed in their heated conversation to pay heed to anything else.

“I think that I should take the head back,” Sul said, “Then everyone will see it and know we tell the truth.”

“Do you mean to claim it for yourself,” Ard said looking at him suspiciously.

“Well why not,” Sul said, “I have been designated leader and as such I should have the honour.”

“That honour should go to the king,” Itso said, “He is our true leader.”

“Then where is he?” Ard said, “He should be here if he was worth anything. If not then his designation is worthless.”

“Are you saying I am worthless,” Sul said angrily.

“I am saying the office given you is worthless because it is the King that is worthless.”

Ard said, “I am also saying that in the interest of true honour that hunter that kills it is entitled to its head.”

“I see no fault with that,” Itso said.

“Then I shall go ahead with the trackers to make sure it is me,” Sul said and quickened up.

“I too will follow,” Ard said and speeded up.

“What’s the matter with them?” Ew said catching up with Itso.

“They want the honour of keeping its head,” Itso said, “Leave them to it I say. I will be happy just to get out of this alive.”

“Well if there is honour to be had,” Ew said and with Wnr raced ahead.

“We’ll catch them up,” Teo said, “They’ll have to wait until nightfall anyway.”

“True,” Itso said, “Where’s the honour in that?”

“Just getting rid of it will do for me,” Teo said, “It’s got a nerve just walking in like that and that worries me.”

“That Non said it would be easy,” Sis said, “But I notice that he’s not here. No. I think that creature’s got more about it then we give it credit for.”

“Well it won’t get the chance,” Itso said, “It won’t even see us com..”

Itso was decapitated; the dragon could bite with the speed of a tornado. Before he had hit the ground Teo had fallen, his stomach sliced off. Sis could not speak, not that it mattered for he would not have had time to say anything. The dragon’s breath had struck again.

Ahead the debate was still continuing. “When I get its head,” Sul said, “I will tie it to the doorway so that all who pass it will know what I have done.”

“You will never get it,” Ew said, “When I get it I will put it inside and let it adorn my wall so that all who see it will know I am a man of worth.”

“You both have high hopes,” Wnr said, “Though little else. When I get it I will see that it

is put in the middle of the Great Hall so everyone will see it. When the story tellers retell my fame it will be there to remind them.”

“None of us will get it,” Nes said, “For whoever does will not keep it. The honour will be grabbed by Non as King and as time passes all of us will be forgotten.”

“No, never,” Sul said, “Not while I breath.”

“It will be long after you have died,” Nes said, “How many of you know who was with Erju when he slayed the two headed bear.”

“He was alone,” Sul said, “That’s what the storytellers tell us.”

“My point exactly,” Nes said.

“What?” Sul said confused.

“What the stories tell us,” Nes said, “Are you seriously trying to tell me that he would go up alone against that two headed monster.”

“But he was a king,” Sul said, “He had special powers.”

“What like Non?” Nes said.

“Ah,” Sul said, “But Non is not a true king. Gress was only elected.”

“Then I suggest that he has no claim to the monster’s head,” Nes said, “I say that whoever takes the monster’s head should be the rightful king for he has proved himself. Something that Non has not done,”

“That is a good idea,” Wnr said, “Let it be known that whoever gets the head is the rightful king. I vow that if it is not I then I will hold no ill feeling towards whoever it might be. Not only that I vow to recognise him as king and champion his cause.” They all vowed the same and then Sul said, “I feel we are getting pretty close now. Nes go back and bring up the rear.”

Nes set off to find the others but did not return. After a few minutes Sul said, “They cannot be that far behind, surely? Wait here. I will fetch them,” and went off back in their direction.

“No you are right about that Non,” Ew said, “Worthless and arrogant with it too.”

“I know what you mean,” Wnr said, “Non the wiser. What’s all that about. I mean let’s be honest that Cos is not that wise,” and started laughing.

“Yes,” Ew said laughing, “Crag’s been seasoning his woman for years and right under his nose.”

“The whole family are a waste of time,” Wnr said, “Well except Ti that is”

“I would have preferred her with us rather than her cousin,” Ew said.

“That Sul, there is something about him. I can’t put my finger on it.” A great gash ripped down Ew’s front and he fell backwards. Wnr’s throat was ripped out before Ew had hit the ground and Ard fell, his stomach well and truly gouged out.

Sul called and looked around but there was no sign of them, “What is this?” he said aloud.

“Retribution,” the dragon said and Sul turned to see it in all its glory. It had sat back on its hind legs and stood three times as tall as Sul, “You think that you can come up against me?”

“No,” Sul said, “Help.”

“It’s no good calling there is no one left to hear you. You are on your own.”

Now in case you are wondering how the dragon manages to talk without poisoning I had better elaborate. Dragon’s breath is not halitosis or anything like that. It is an attacking tool. In much the same way the skunk uses his spray as a defence the dragon uses his

breath as an attack. It comes from a separate set of lungs so when not activated the breath returns to normal.

“You mean to kill me?” Sul said in fear.

“You would have already been dead, no I am not greedy. Ten of you will do for today. Too many seems to play havoc with my indigestion.”

“So why have you spared me?”

“I don’t want to overuse my food supply plus I have a message for your king. Though first tell me. Why is he not here himself?”

“He sent me instead.”

“That is not the way of the king he will be the first to be given. The message is that he is to shave the heads of all to be eaten for I am not too partial to human hair. That was the message. Tell him and then after I come tomorrow at noon tell the next king the same.”

“I will,” Sul said and made ready to go.

“Not so fast there is no hurry. You humans intrigue me. They say that you are to inherit the Earth. I can’t see it myself you seem too stupid and self seeking. I thought that Man got his inheritance through his humility yet I see little of it about. What makes you think that you can just come and steal someone else’s food. That’s hardly humble is it?”

“We did not know that they were yours. The first time we knew anything about you was when you came for tribute.”

“Maybe but you have food all around you, you can eat a lot more varied diet than me. I am only adapted to eat flesh so I am a lot more restricted than you.”

“I did not realise I’m sorry.”

“You seem a man of honour, a rare thing indeed so before I let you go I will extract an oath from you.”

“You have me at your will.”

“You must promise never to eat flesh again and you must tell your offspring the same and tell them to tell theirs.”

Sul promised and so was released. He quickly ran back and related all that he was told to an ashen Non.

“We are in real trouble,” Non said, “Maybe we should withdraw back to the caves?”

“It will only follow there is nowhere safe for us to go.”

“Well we have tried to fight it at least we can say that. You have tried your best Sul, for that the clan of Gress salutes you.”

“And what of you lord?”

“I will shave my head tomorrow,” Non said accepting his fate, “And after that it is up to Cos.”

“It is not a job that I would like to take on,” Sul admitted, “For I fear it will only want to eat kings.”

“He has a quarter of a Moon to come up with an answer it is longer than I had. So that is kingship then the monsters next meal. Maybe we should send for help?”

“Too far away besides I would say that they would not get too far anyway. That monster will be keeping an eye on us he seems a very able creature.”

“It looks like our grandfather made a great mistake and we must now pick up the pieces. Why ever did you offer protection to those hens?”

“It was Ti,” Sul admitted, “She was the one that came up with it.”

“She was the one that told me about the new fruit and roots. Well at least we will eat well



and be fat for it.”

“We have found her,” Sihai said in another dimension, “I am willing to wager my life on it.”

“I think you are right,” Etop said, “Bran is her husband so there is a connection.”

“And Cos her nephew,” Gobcos said, “That ties it all in.”

“She has done nothing wrong yet,” Etop said, “Not openly anyway. Now we have our eye on her though so everything will be opened to us.”

“Unless the dragon does us all a favour,” Sihai said, “Non will be no more tomorrow so it will only be a matter of time.”

“It means to only have kings,” Etop said, “Get rid of all the excess roosters and leave the women to carry on conceiving. But I would say thinking about it that since the dragon arrived on the scene our worries are over.”

“Really,” Sihai said, “How do you work that out?”

“Well it’s not going to let its food escape,” Etop said, “They might know the secrets but they will never be able to pass them on. With the dragon standing guard those secrets will remain there for eternity.”

“Their attempts of domesticating fowl ended up with them being domesticated,” Sihai said with a laugh, “I see good irony there.”

“Divine laws,” Etop said, “Maybe you are right. I think they may have cursed themselves in Creation’s eyes.”

“That would put their progress back generations if it were true,” Sihai said, “We could catch up on some of that lost time.”

“I can’t see it myself,” Gobcos said, “Man still seems in favour.”

“It is a dragon,” Etop said, “Creation’s agent of retribution. I would say thinking more, they have transgressed. No animal can enslave another.”

“Then maybe it will not stop with the clan Gress,” Sihai said, “With its appetite for destruction who is to say that it will not spread its wings.”

“And then Man is no more,” Etop said, “And we extend our life eternally,” and thought awhile before saying, “Maybe we can help.”

#### **Chapter 4**

Ti returned to the Netherworld unaware of Sul’s return. She had prepared the potion for the dragon and vowed to go after it the next day if Sul had not returned. “Magick,” Dryda said, “And how to use it to help you to hunt.”

“Can it do that?”

“Well more to the point can you? You have to be in the right state of mind to do it.”

“Sorry?”

“You have to enter the Netherworld, while you sleep you occupy a different state of mind to the one you have while you wake. You have to achieve this state of mind while you are awake to enter the Netherworld. Your astral body has to leave your physical body.”

“Right,” Ti said not really understanding but hoping that she would pick it up later.

“This can be done through certain plants and tree sap. I will show you,” and did as he said. Once finished Dryda said, “To ease the passage you have to purge yourself both of food so don’t eat from well before hand and material desire. This is done through scourging for it is the best way of exerting the kind of pain you need to purge the material desire. Once purged of food and material desire you achieve the same vibration wave as

your astral body for it has cast off its physical and mental drive so it is just spiritual. It is like the mind in sleep for it does not crave outer world experience.”

“Er right,” Ti said still pretending she was with him.

“Well anyway,” Dryda said knowing that she wasn’t, “Once you are there you can summon me and I am forced to tell you where the prey is.”

“Right,” Ti said, “And when I summoned you before?”

“That’s a different way,” Dryda said, “That is how you can summon prey to you.”

“Really, that would save a lot of trouble.”

“Well you have to be in the same state of mind to achieve it,” Dryda said putting a dampener on things, “You have to become that being you are hunting.”

“What?”

“To capture it you have to become its essence and to do that you have to wear its skin and chant that chant over again. Once you are attuned to the right vibration it will summon itself to you. So next day when out hunting that is what you’ll find.”

“You know I can understand that.”

“I’ll bet that’s the first thing today,” Dryda said with a laugh as he disappeared.

News of the hunters’ failure was the first thing that greeted Ti when she awoke the next morning. They were shaving Non’s head as she left for the dragon. As she followed the trail she met with the monkey. “What are you doing?” it said from the trees, “I thought that you would have been long gone.”

“No point it said that it would only follow.”

“Quite a show, you should have seen, well not seen it as the case maybe.”

“Sorry?”

“It’s that quick you can only see it by its effect. Just bodies flying.”

“Something to look forward to then.”

“What, are you still going to hunt it?”

“Not much choice besides it could be quite a thrill.”

“Rather you than me. If it’s any help I know where it lives.”

“That would save me a lot of time normally but he is on his way already, I was just going to lie in ambush.”

“It’s but 3 leagues away you pass it every day and yet you never see it.”

“Very well,” Ti said and the monkey guided it from the trees. When they got close it came down and said, “See that thick foliage. It hides a great cave behind it. Once when I was young I sneaked in when it was out and had a look around. You go down a little passageway and come to a great cavern. You can’t miss it.”

“I shall wait until it makes its entrance, it does not do to enter its lair.”

“And then what?” a voice said from behind them. They turned around to see the dragon.

“And then I will kill you,” Ti said much to the monkey’s horror. “Quiet,” it said, “You’ll get us both killed.”

“I see what you bring with you,” the dragon said looking with contempt at Ti’s bow and arrows and thinking that she might be a little mad. “So tell me she man. Why do you want to kill me?”

“To save my brother and to stop you taking tribute.”

“I take it that your brother is the king,” the dragon said and Ti nodded, “So first he sends others and then he sends his sister. No I am sorry. You are safe though, I have no quarrel with you. You would be better off at home making babies. You are brave I will give you

that. Come on in” and made them both enter his lair. The cavern was huge, it was far greater than Ti had thought possible from the outside.”So what do you think?” the dragon said,” I was thinking of moving you all in so I won’t have far to walk.”

“It’s spacious enough,” Ti said genuinely impressed with the cavern if not the sentiment.

“No, just joking,” the dragon said,” I need the exercise. I should not really be talking to you as it does not do to personalise ones food but I’ve got to admit I do miss the company.”

“You’re lonely?” Ti said in surprise.

“Why not, the mind needs stimulation, I was created for a solitary life but I’ve evolved over time and now I seek company.”

“Now that is surprising,” the monkey said, “Strangest thing is that with what you have seen you would make for good company.”

“Many things and many stories,” the dragon said, “But no one to share them with. I need to pass on my wisdom but no one seems fit enough to hear it.”

“Your wisdom,” the monkey said his interest picking up, “Now that would be worth hearing.”

“Not for your ears old Man you are free to roam about at will. New Man though. He is going nowhere.”

“And if I promised not to tell anyone,” the monkey said.

“Is your word worth anything?”

“It is my life.”

“Then it will be,” the dragon said and thought a moment before saying, “Fair enough, give me your word first,” and the monkey did. After the monkey had given his word the dragon turned to Ti and said, “I am not from your world so I cannot be defeated in your world.”

“Are you from the Netherworld?”

“I was created in the Netherworld though I would not say that I was from it.”

“Sorry?” the monkey said.

“I was formed in the Netherworld and then manifested in the outer world,” the dragon said, “So although you see me and I am solid I am not really here as such. I am still in the Netherworld and so I can see things beyond realities vision. I see your brother with shaven head awaiting his demise back at your home even though I am here in this cave. That is my first pearl of wisdom. Tell the rest of your clan that in case they have a desire to escape.”

“I’ll bare that in mind,” Ti said.

“Creation,” the monkey said, “What is its purpose?”

“You dare ask that of me,” the dragon said,” Do you think that you are worthy of such a pearl?”

“So it is not imparting wisdom that you have brought me in for,” Ti said upon realisation,

“It is just to lay down the law.”

“Something it would be wise to follow,” the dragon said, “In the quest for your survival that is wisdom surely?”

“But what about the five worlds of creation?” Ti said, “Have you no real wisdom?”

“How did you know about that that is not for the ears of man?”

“I was told, though sworn to secrecy.”

“That sounds like a demon. Then you must be a spur.”

“Sorry?”

“Man is more of a refiner than a definer. Creation first defines it and then man takes over.”

“That sounds about right,” Ti said with a slight trace of bitterness.

“Certain of your kind, usually through their own humility are pure enough to become receivers,” the Dragon continued, “It seems that you are one. I will need to think about this,” and though his body was still there his mind left them and went to receive fresh instruction.

“Is she still there?” the monkey said in a whisper (well as close to a whisper as he could get for his voice was not that refined), “She’s not dead is she?”

“It looks like she has left her body. I have heard talk of this.”

“So where has she gone then?”

“I’m not sure, the Netherworld perhaps. Maybe she has to obey orders then?”

“I did not realise. She must be back in favour then.”

Meanwhile the dragon was face to face with its creator a great vortex of energy triangular in shape though not solid in form. Everything around it was vibrant orange, pulsed out as it span. “Dragus,” it said and the dragon’s spirit absorbed itself in it. After awhile it pulled out and the vortex said, “Quite a problem Dragus and brought about through a misunderstanding. Man has not enslaved the hen as it has come of its own free will. Not only that the hen was pledged a full lifespan before it was eaten which you did not give to Man. You are off your path but that is easily mended. You must forego your tribute.”

“No I have the taste now,”

“You are going against yourself,” the vortex said, “You know what will happen?” The dragon remained silent so the vortex continued, “You are right. She is a definer, which brings us on to another matter. It appears that my work is being hampered with.

Treachery is a foot. It appears that the Masters of Wisdom have changed the agenda.”

“Sorry?”

“Instead of encouraging Man’s growth they are now hampering it. I think they think they can bring about Man’s fall and so give themselves more time. As they have changed the agenda so too will I. I will create new Masters so that leaves you with a little job to do.”

As this was happening the monkey and Ti’s conversation continued, “Quite an awesome thing,” the monkey said, “It definitely looks indestructible.”

“Oh it can be beaten although not with spears.”

“I was going to say they would be as much use as that plaything you have with you.”

“This,” Ti said, “This is a lot more deadly than my spear. I can fire it at a distance so it increases my killing range.”

“Well kill might be a bit too strong a word,” the monkey said with a laugh, “Tickle maybe.”

“Shows how much you know, this could put that monster to sleep for good.”

“I’ll believe you,” the monkey said with a smirk, “Though I would not tell anyone else that.”

“What’s that supposed to mean. I am not a liar, I can prove it.”

“Don’t fire at it,” the monkey said in a panic, “You might wake it up.”

Meanwhile the dragon was still taking in orders, “Before the new can begin the old must finish. I charge you to wipe out the Masters of Wisdom so through them I can regenerate the new masters.”

“By your...” the dragon said but got no further. Ti and the monkey watched with horror as the dragon combusted.

“It was only water,” the monkey said, “And that little stick. You killed it, does that make you king?”

“What?” Ti said, “What are you talking about?”

“I overheard some of the men as they tracked the monster. They said that whoever slew it should be the rightful king for that is more honest than having an elected king.”

“Well I guess that idea died along with them,” Ti said and looking around the cavern

“You know it would make quite a good place to live really.”

“Well it’s empty now; it would seem such a waste.”

They were stopped there by Dryda’s sudden appearance, “It appears you have shot yourself in the foot,” he said, “And I am sorry that it was me that made the arrow.”

“But we got rid of the dragon and along with it the tribute.”

“She had been told to forego it; it was just a misunderstanding that was easily cleared up.”

“I never knew, how am I supposed to know that.”

“Well that matter is done with except for the balance of course. I am afraid you have cursed your clan to the same fate as yourself. From now on the only time they will get on will be at the time of procreation.”

“That’s going to make me popular.”

“They need never know it was you but that’s the dragon sorted anyway. So onto shooting yourself in the foot.”

“You mean that, that wasn’t it? The curse.”

“No that’s an automatic thing. You shot yourself in the foot because the dragon would now have been your friend. She had been charged with wiping out the Masters of Wisdom for they are now Man’s enemies.”

“So she would have helped us, and the Masters?”

“They are very powerful, the only thing that could have beaten them were the dragon. Oh and Man’s free will.”

“Man’s free will.”

“Yes, when it is fully nurtured. Now that won’t be for a long time so it looks like you are on your own. You are safe here though for their powers do not reach this far. It is a bolt hole put in by Creation in case of events just like this.”

“And what can they do, what are we actually talking about?”

“They cannot kill you but they can isolate you and alter your form so that you are excluded from the rest of your kind.”

“They can, that’s some power.”

“Originally it was put in place to extract any man that proved not only worthless but a detriment to Man. It was in case they would try and hamper Man’s evolution.”

“And what other powers have they got, not that, that doesn’t sound enough on its own.”

“They can enhance abilities. That is generally for the other animals though.”

“And my chances I mean I beat the dragon with your help I was wondering if you might know of anything?”

“Not at present but you might be safe if you are careful. They don’t know that we are on to them so they will try and find some excuse so it looks like they have good reason.”

“So if I keep my head down I will be alright maybe I’m worrying over nothing.”

“No, they have a mind to convict you and are looking for an excuse. It will only be a matter of time,” and disappeared.

“That doesn’t sound good,” the monkey said.

“Nothing I can do about it. I suppose I had better tell Non that he has shaved his hair in vain,” and made to leave.

“Don’t you have to take the head back? That’s what those men said anyway.”

Ti hacked it off with her cutting flint and dragged the head towards the entrance, “Are you sure,” she said, “This has some weight.”

“That’s what they said,” the monkey said and so she carried on with her struggle. It took her ages but eventually she managed to get it back to the complex. It was around noon and Non was waiting nervously when she arrived. “However?” he said for the relief was too much for him.

“It seems it was a misunderstanding, no matter it is done now.”

With that Sul stepped forward and told the gathered clan that it had been decided by the hunters that whoever killed the dragon would be the rightful king of the clan and he had vowed to uphold their cause. This caused quite a stir amongst the clan and they divided into their relevant sex. Mutual accusations of idleness and arrogance flew around until in the end they agreed to differ. Ti became a Queen and took the women and moved to the dragon’s old lair where she taught them what she knew about magick and they became renowned as hunters and made their own legends. Sul reneged on his oath and stayed with the men and Non made a fresh vow. He vowed that he and all his direct descendants would shave their heads to prove that if it ever should happen again then they would be ready to make the sacrifice. Sul did keep one promise though and that was the vow that he would never eat meat. In time most of the clan went the same way. Ti’s idea of keeping her head down lasted as long as she was in the cave. The Masters saw her with the dragons head and that was enough to seal her fate. They reasoned that they were doing the Earth Mother a service for it was her agent of retribution. They also reasoned that as there was now no rival predator in the jungle they would have to create one. Ti and Bran were extracted from the collective memory and reformed and re adapted to their new purpose. Tigress was created.

## 4. Jackal's Tale

Time passed quietly for awhile. The Masters were still unaware that they themselves were being watched but there was nothing major to interfere with so they stayed idle. The clans grew bigger and with their thirst for adventure drove on and found new lands but it was more of a time for refinement than anything else so there was little to give the Masters stress, well until Jack came along that was. He was from the clan of **Al**, a noble hunter without fear and strong. Now although Jack liked hunting he had an affinity for the land and a fascination for the season and how it changed the flora. He also had a fascination for the Sun and its warming rays and would often just stand and absorb its heat. He was a king in the true sense of the word, humble and wise. He professed sound judgement, a true descendent of **Al** who himself was a humble man. Jack was brought up on stories of how every king since **Al** had proved themselves in honour and refinement, **Al's** son **Ovin** who had made peace with the wolves and so life less hazardous. His son **Gwor** who had discovered new fruit and so increased the clan's diet. His son **Dret** who finally drove out the wolves so the growing clan was free of competition, his son **Urns** who came up with new traps and made hunting more efficient. His son **Ink** who had designed a spear that you could throw, propelled by twine it went a much further distance and finally Jack's father **Ind** who had organised the first expedition when a third of the clan left for pastures new.

The stories of the first order had been exaggerated so much that they had long been discredited for the idea of a three headed bear that spat fire and only drank human blood was out of place in this more modern age. The tale begins with Jack looking for a quest. It had come to his attention that he had done nothing of note to uphold the family tradition and he had been thinking that it was about time he changed that. "What happened to the time of adventure?" he said to his mate Adea, "Did it ever exist, three headed bears and all that."

"Who can really say," Adea said, "But I doubt it myself. It's probably a thing that only the old man in the wood would know," and laughed before saying, "Well you wanted adventure why don't you see if he exists."

"That's only a story," Jack said. The clan had been brought up to fear the forest when they were young. This was done through the use of a demonic figure in the 'watch out the bogeyman will get you' sort of role. The stories had been going around for so long that the clan thought he was immortal though being a demon he would be.

"Well it's got to be based on something," Adea said, "They say that all the stories are. Why not. Think of it as an adventure? It would be good to be out and about."

"Yes why not," Jack said, "Don't tell anyone that I'm doing it though."

"I don't think your kingship will last long if I did," Adea said with a laugh, "No, your secret is safe with me."

Forsaking all protocol (for it had not been invented yet) Jack went off armed with his spear and bow and arrow (in case he felt peckish) and headed into the deep dense forest. He was not unduly worried for with the wolves no longer there he thought there was no danger. Not believing in demons he did not perceive it like the superstitious said, the lair of the demon, just an overgrown wood that was hard to get through. He fought his way through the crowded thicket hoping to find another animal for either news or food. As day turned to night he made and lit a fire and sat close to it for warmth. It was not long before he had company though. "Do you mind if I join you?" a strange figure asked. It

was small in stature and though not a man it was man like.

"Sure," Jack said without fear, "Help yourself," and the figure made itself comfortable. As it looked at the fire it said, "You are very lucky to have this gift, a noble blessing and no mistake. We are not allowed it."

"Sorry?" Jack said for in the semi dark he had thought it human, "What clan are you from?"

"I am not of your world. I come to your world but only at night."

"Are you a demon?" Jack said not believing his ears, "Or is this just some joke at my expense."

"I am not of your kind. As to being a demon I don't know what Man saw fit to call me but I am guessing that would be it."

"Are you the Old Man of the Woods," Jack said and then felt strangely self-conscious for doing so.

"I am old it is true. And this is the woods so that if true. I am not a man though so I am not what you seek."

"Do you know him though?" Jack said thinking that he might actually exist now.

"I have heard stories though I am a creature of the night and he of the day so our two worlds do not collide."

"No matter," Jack said reasoning that the figure might be able to help him. "I was looking for news of the olden times from him that was all. You might be able to help me if you have a mind for it."

"Well you have showed me courtesy so I am obligated to you, if I can help I will."

"I was trying to find out if the age of adventure really existed. I mean a three headed bear that spat fire. Was it real?"

"Maybe, but I am not from your world so I wouldn't really know."

"Oh," Jack said slightly disappointed.

"I say maybe," the figure said seeing this, "Because in our world there are creatures worse than that."

"Really could you tell me about them?"

"It will do no harm but first I have to tell you about myself and how I came to be so you get a better understanding."

"Fair enough my name is Jack by the way."

"Dina, I am from a world different to your world. Yours is one of manifestation whilst mine is conscious appearance."

"Sorry?"

"I am not solid in form so how you perceive me is how I look to you," and with that Dina turned into a three headed bear that spat fire and then turned back again, "So there very well might have been a three headed bear."

"I did not realise, so you can change into anything you want to."

"Not me, you can change me into anything that you want to."

"Me I was not aware of it."

"No, it comes from within you. I could have been grotesque or I could have been beautiful and judging by my appearance to you, you have not put much thought into it."

"Well up until now I have thought you did not exist," Jack admitted, "I'm a little too old for that sort of thing."

"Does not your legend say that a king can consort with a demon and that is what you



thought I was?"

"And I am a king," Jack said and as realisation hit him Dina changed form and got more grotesque.

"Thanks, was that really called for?"

"So you do exist then and are you here to help us for that is what the legends say."

"Oh no that is the elements for that was their created purpose. But fear not for I am not here to hinder either for I am beholden to you."

"So what do you actually do then? If I'm not being nosey."

"I have no purpose though it was not always that way. No Jack I could have been you."

"What?"

"It's true, see all this land that was given to you; you were not the only candidate for the job. We too walked your world and lived in mutual harmony."

"What happened?"

"You proved more humble. We were moved to another world though as a concession for it was a close thing we were allowed back at night."

"The Netherworld?"

"Well that covers them all but it was one of them yes."

"So how many actually are there, I thought there was just the one."

"No, there are nine worlds of creation before manifestation."

"Sorry?"

"Before you get here, but when you say the Netherworld you can go to all nine when you sleep so you can call it that."

"And you are from the world of conscious appearance, one of the nine."

"That's right the final world before manifestation. We have no purpose there though but it is our home."

"So what do you actually do then? You said that you have no purpose but everyone must do something."

"No, I am just surplus spiritual energy now."

"Spiritual energy."

"Creative energy from the first world."

"The first world?"

"The world of the Creator from here everything manifests itself. First it divides into three aspects which are another three worlds."

"Sorry?" Jack said wanting more light.

"The world of Creation needs refinement before it can come to manifestation so it created the world of the Masters of Wisdom to give it a purpose. Well it's more to uphold the purpose for the purpose has been set. It also created the Mistress of Understanding to balance the Masters and then mutated once again to create the worlds of the elements to aid Man's progression. From here our life began. You became the purpose and I became the understanding of that purpose. They are the worlds of our makers. These are the worlds that you kings enter when they meet the demons."

"And these worlds what are they called?"

"Well there are four all told, one for each of the elements. There is the world of Air, the domain of your higher self, your father energy, the world of Earth, the domain of the Earth Mother, the mother energy. The world of Fire, the domain you generally go to when you sleep and the world of Water, the domain in which you go to during the day.

From the last two it manifests once more to the world of conscious appearance. Each one is a separate sphere.”

“That’s amazing; I can go into every one of them you say.”

“Depending on your strength and purity of mind, yes.”

“I would certainly get adventure there, thank you. I am obligated to you.”

“Then perhaps you could do me a service in return?”

“If I can and if I can’t I will try my best to.”

“Good it might actually work to your advantage though for my actions are geared for the greater good.”

“So you do have a purpose then.”

“Well I do now for you have given me one.”

“I have?”

“I am to become your teacher is that not a good purpose to serve?”

“Well yes, I suppose so.”

“Good, now I can move to a new world, a better world. You will never regret it.”

“If you have all that knowledge at your disposal then it would be a pleasure. You mentioned a favour, was that it?”

“No that was a mutual blessing. Now I have a purpose I am pure energy so I can evolve closer to the Creator. I am now what you think of as a demon and you, well you will be a true king.”

“With your knowledge, yes I can see that. Then this favour, my sentiments are unchanged.”

“I have noticed that the caves you dwell in are much too small for your growing numbers and I have noticed that the trees around us are in need of some attention. I thought that maybe it might balance.”

“Sorry?”

“Clear the woods and make new dwellings with the proceeds of that clearance. That would be of great service to me.”

“I could clear the woods of their thicket although I don’t know how to make dwellings from them.”

“I will show you but not in this world. It will come to you when you sleep.”

“Fair enough so this knowledge that you have, how did you come by it if that’s not a rude question?”

“Well it is,” Dina said with a laugh, “But I will answer it anyway. I came by it because I was created by it. It is my essence so when I impart it I live in you. Well one of your worlds anyway.”

“My worlds?”

“Within you lie all these worlds. You are the final manifestation. You have been truly blessed for you have the Creative force within. You are a small scale replica of Creation itself.”

“I never knew and you say that you are also spiritual energy.”

“Well so are you for at this manifestation it comes out as knowledge. You are what you know.”

“So that’s what spiritual energy is, knowledge.”

“On this manifestation but to understand it properly would take more explaining.”

“Go on, well if you have a mind to.”

“Everything has a spirit it is part of one great mind. Now this creative energy that the spirit actually is, is evolved through awareness. A flower is more aware of its surroundings than a mountain and an animal is more aware of its surroundings than a tree. Can you understand that?”

”Yes I think so. So awareness would another name for that be refinement?”

“Good well remembered. Now to be truly refined you have to be aware at all times. This is a state of mind in which you as an entity do not exist. You are there for the good of everything else without a selfish thought in your head. When you have achieved this you can consort with demons for you are a king. That is your purpose.”

“Right I can see that.”

“Well now although you might be refined other things around you might not be as. When you eat you not only consume what you eat you consume its energy as well.”

“That’s news to me.”

“Yes so if it is consumed by anger or fear you take it on board as well.”

“So I am what I eat.”

“To a certain extent, blessing it with fire takes a lot of the energy away but it does have an effect on your temper only not as significant as if you ate the meat unblessed.”

“Yes, would that be why the predators are more aggressive than their prey then?”

“Roughly, for some predators eat other predators so it is defined differently. But aggressiveness is not just confined to meat eaters some flora eaters are also very aggressive. They do not end up as prey though.”

“So it’s not clear cut then, mind you I suppose that it all has to blend in so it is not that simple.”

“That’s it exactly everything has to find its place in the Grand Design. Anyway for your first lesson to begin you have to go to sleep,” and disappeared.

Not long after that Jack fell to sleep and was greeted by Dina in the land of Earth. He had rows and rows of branches all cut to size and laid out on the floor. “Your first lesson begins,” Dina said and laid out some of the thicker pieces of wood. He interlinked them with thinner pieces threaded across them and when that was done he lifted them up so they were vertical, “See, you have a wall. Well the basis of one anyway.”

“It looks a bit flimsy,” Jack said giving it a shake, “I don’t think that it will last very long.”

“It’s not finished yet that is just the bones. You need to put some meat on it that’s all.”

“What?” Jack said thinking he was talking literal.

“Build it out a little to give it strength,” Dina said and started to plaster clay on both sides of the frame. After he had finished he said, “When it dries it will be more solid.”

“I can’t see it working as a wall; wouldn’t the rain wash it away?”

“Eventually,” Dina admitted, “Don’t let it get too bad though and you should be alright. Put more clay on it when it starts to happen.”

“Fair enough, what about the roof though will it work on that?”

“Slightly different design for that, not so many cross pieces and instead of clay interlink them with more pieces going the other way and then tie bundles of branches, the thinnest you can find to these and that should prove watertight. Make sure that you put a good slope on the roof though, that will make it easier for the rain to drain off.”

“I’ll bare that in mind.”

“That’s the basics anyway, drive thick pieces of wood into the ground and tie the walls to

them to hold them on the ground and also tie the ends of the walls together to hold it all in place.”

“I’ll give it a go looking at it I can see it working and we could definitely use new dwellings.”

“Well that should do the job it was intended for,” Dina said and disappeared.

Jack woke up the next morning and went back to the complex. Adea was surprised to see him back so early and even more surprised when he told her what had happened. Jack called council and showed them his discovery and the clan of AI received new dwellings.

## **Chapter2**

Jack was as good as his word and some of the forest was cleared for the much needed building supplies. The Masters had noticed but were not too worried as it was not a precedence Man had made dwellings from the environment before so they just thought it was natural progression so life went on as normal. It was a full Moon the next time that he saw Dina.

“Where have you been?” Jack said, “I thought that you were going to teach me?”

“You weren’t ready for me. I had to let what I taught you sink in.”

“Oh yes I can see that.”

“Well the wood looks a lot better now; you must have worked hard to achieve it.”

“Well we got some new dwellings out of it and just in time.”

“It was getting a little crowded, it must be quite a task to survive I bet.”

“Very tricky, our hunters are out non-stop just to try and keep the clan in meat.”

“A lot of mouths to feed I am sure they must be tired.”

“Exhausted, never mind it will soon be time to split the clan again. I will have to send out some scouts to try and locate some new caves.”

“I do not think that you will need to now you can make your own.”

“Yes, so now we are not so restricted. I should have thought really.”

“No matter but now you realise that why don’t you move some of your clan into the forest, there is plenty of game there. They won’t be so hard to track in a cleared forest.”

“I’m afraid that it is only the fringes that are cleared we did not get too far in.”

“When they make the new homes they will clear the space and then when the area is spent move further in for the forest is endless.”

“I’ll put it to the council,” Jack said and Dina disappeared.

Jack woke up and told Adea about the dream. She thought it was a good idea and had come at a good time which was the general consensus of opinion. Three quarters of the clan left in groups of 15 and disappeared into the vastness of the forest. Each group set up an area big enough to sustain itself and kept close contact with each other so the problem was alleviated for the time being. It took a full Moon for all this to happen and after it was over Jack met up with Dina in the Netherworld. “So problem solved,” Dina said, “Well for the time being anyway.”

“True, it won’t be long before we run out once more.”

“Have you ever thought about farming the land? You could get its true value then.”

“Farming the land?” Jack repeated.

“That’s what you did in the forest, well a form of it anyway. You cultivated the forest and from it got new dwellings.”

“Right,” Jack said understanding.

“Well you can also clear the land and plant your own food. To do that you will have to understand the season and see how the land changes over the year.”

“Yes, I have noticed that it sort of dies and is reborn again.”

“Very good, now this cycle we divide into four stages. When it is reborn we call it spring, its main growth is in summer, it ripens in autumn and dies and sleeps through winter to awaken once more in spring.”

“Yes, how does that come to be?”

“It’s all to do with the strength of the Sun, when it is strong the plant can grow.”

“I have noticed that it seems a lot warmer during their main growth. What did you call it? Summer.”

“The Sun is the bringer of its life so when it brings more life, the plant can feed more.”

“I can see that it seems to give me a lift if I just stand there and let it.”

“So now you know the seasons you can work around them. So they then work for you.”

“Right, how’s that then?”

“Plant in spring and harvest in autumn, save yourself enough seed over winter to plant in the spring once again.”

“Seeds?”

“They are the plants offspring, the things that you pound into flour to make cakes.” (this innovation had come during the time of Ink but it was put down to natural progression for it had precedence in the clan of Con.)

“And we plant them in spring?”

“Once the ground is cleared.”

“Now that sounds like hard work. You mean the trees as well I guess.”

“Everything but don’t dishearten, take your inspiration from the world around you. How does the Earth Mother do it?” Jack looked blank so Dina said, “By fire.”

“Just burn it you mean?”

“Well not just, you need a healthy respect for fire. You need to do it under strict control. Fire could quite easily entrap you.”

“How would I do that?”

“Never stand downwind, do it well away from the dwellings and just keep well away from it. Once the fire has done its work clear anything that’s left and keep it clear.”

“Yes it’s pretty dry now so that should be a help.”

“And then I will see you again,” Dina said and disappeared.

Jack woke up and told Adea of his dream. She thought it a good idea and so did most of the other twenty that had remained with them. They picked a good spot and let the fire burn its course. The Masters thought it was just natural phenomenon so did not take an interest. It took the rest of the Moon to clear it but when it was done it was vast and as it was during the growing season grass soon started to take up the vacant space. Jack met Dina after all that was done.

“A good job,” Dina said, “You should be happy with yourself.”

“It will still be another year before we can take advantage of it but the main work is done so I’m not complaining.”

“You could always hire it out. I’m sure some of the animals would be keen.”

“I suppose they could borrow it over the dead time we have no use for it.”

“You could borrow it if you like but I was thinking of hiring it out.”

“You have something in mind?”

“Those cattle you hunt would be interested. It is a lot better grazing land then where they are now.”

“I can’t really see it as they fear us too much and will think we are just trying to lead them into an ambush.”

“Tell them it is just their milk you are after it is a most excellent foodstuff.”

“And how would I collect it? How would I get it out of the cow for a start?”

“Just like its offspring does. Take your inspiration from the world around you. You can keep it in your pots though I would not leave it too long for it goes bad quite quickly.”

“It will need it for its offspring though.”

“With the better grazing it will produce more milk and as it over produces anyway that should leave a lot spare.”

“They might go for it if they can get over the fear that is.”

“Tell them you will only eat them when they are old and good for nothing you can hunt other animals in the meantime.”

“I could give it a go and then see what this milk tastes like.”

“Good,” Dina said and disappeared.

The following day as luck would have it Jack was walking across the cleared land and came across a cow. It was not on the land itself but looking at it from the forest. It was about to run off but Jack stopped it saying, “A moment. I am not here to harm you in fact I could do you a lot of good.”

The cow keeping a safe distance said, “I don’t think you are capable of doing me good. You could tell me what has happened here though. I remember when all this was trees.”

“We cleared it so we can grow things to eat.”

“Grow your own food. That is a good idea. Does that mean you will not hunt any more?”

“We will but not cattle if you like my plan.”

“Your plan?”

“The land is not ready, until it is you can use it to graze. It is good healthy grass and you should get fat on it.”

“Fattening me up,” the cow said with disgust, “Is that it? I will be easy to kill for I can’t run off.”

“It is not your meat it is the milk that you give your offspring that I want.”

“Never, taking milk from a baby you men are a low callous breed.”

“Not all your milk, there will be plenty left for your offspring.”

The cow thought awhile before it said, “So you will let us stay here if we give you some milk. You said that you would not hunt us either?”

“We will wait until you are old and good for nothing and then do it painlessly.”

“Have I your word on that?” the cow said and Jack gave it. Afterwards the cow said,

“You have a good plan. I will put it to the rest,” and went back into the forest,

disappearing into the darkness. Jack went back and told Adea and then the rest of the group. The following morning the clearing was full of cattle, far too many to be sustainable. Jack went over to the cow he had first seen and said, “I see the plan found favour but I fear the land will not keep you in grass for long.”

“Yes,” the cow agreed, “We are much too many. Your plan was well favoured.”

“If I cleared more land would they divide into smaller groups?”

“I should say so,” the cow said and so more clearing began. Each one of the splinter groups cleared land and still the Masters were unaware, putting it down to excessive

natural phenomenon. The cattle moved onto the cleared land and the clan of Al started to get a good supply of milk. Jack saw Dina again on the next full Moon.

“You have done well,” Dina said, “A good food supply but I fear it will leave you in the winter.”

“We have nothing to give them; they have no reason to stay.”

“You must cut grass and store it that will be their reason.”

“Store it, where?”

“You have plenty of empty dwellings now, store it there. You will need the cow over winter anyway.”

“I will?”

“The land must be prepared before you can plant, the cow will help you.”

“The cow, how?”

“That will be your next lesson in the meantime though it might be a good idea to see if any of the other animals want the same privilege.”

“I can’t see them being able to return the favour, they have nothing we want only their meat.”

“In time but for the moment that should suffice, tell them they can stay there and live out the rest of their lives and you will only kill them then. You will never need to hunt again.”

“I could do. I suppose there is more than enough land for the cows.”

“In time I will tell you of their uses. The growing season is nearly done. It is time to store for the season of death,” and disappeared.

Jack woke up and went down to get his milk. As he was milking the cow it said, “Your plan was indeed a good plan. Other animals have expressed an interest in it.”

“Really?” Jack said, “Which ones?”

“Well the sheep seemed pretty keen though it said it did not like giving up its milk.”

“We have enough milk now but tell it that it’s welcome as long as it gives itself up to us when it is old and good for nothing.”

“Fair enough the horse as well, it expressed an interest.”

“Same terms, any more?”

“That was it, the deer was not too happy with it.”

“Really?” Jack said in surprise because he thought it was a good plan.

“It said who was Man to put ownership on the land. It said that it would just come and help itself for the land belongs to no animal.”

“My sweat won that land. Tell it if it thinks it so easy then it should clear its own and is not welcome here.”

“Fair enough,” the cow said and went back and told the deer who went straight back and saw Jack.

“Who are you to put your name on the Earth Mother,” it snapped, “And who are you to tell me where I can and cannot go?”

“I have not put my name on the land for it will be here long after I have gone,” Jack said

“I am using it to grow my own food whilst I live that is all. Anyway I was given the land at the beginning of things so I could actually claim it if I chose to.”

“That was just a Creation myth it has no basis in fact. Man started the story to use it for his gain. Do you take me for a fool?”

“As I said if I chose to, as for no basis in fact I would say that the fact I cleared it is basis

enough. I have mastery over the land, can you say the same?"

"I could clear land if I so desired but I chose not to for we are meant to live with the land and not master it."

"You are not adapted to master the land," Jack said with a laugh, "You have not mastered fire for a start."

"Back to that one again are we? We have not mastered fire for we don't need it. If we would have needed it we would have mastered it by now. Anything that you as a man can do I as a deer can do better."

"Then show me how you intend to clear the land so I might watch and learn."

"Alright but not now for it is the wrong time."

"Yes, right," Jack said dismissively, "It never is the right time is it."

"I am not a liar," the deer snapped and charged into the forest with its head down and antlers at the ready. It hit a small tree and started shaking its head trying to pull it out but the tree stood firm. Dazed and confused it came back and said, "See I told you it was the wrong time. I can only do it at the start of the growing season when the trees are a lot weaker."

"Weaker?"

"See for all your wisdom you do not even know that. Things are weaker at the start of the growing season and stronger at the end for they have more of the Bringer of Light's life."

"I'll have to take your word for that and if you do clear land I will respect that and keep away from it for I will consider that you have earned the right to use it through your hard toil."

"Not so fast man you must think that I am stupid. Your hard work means nothing to me. Unlike the sheep I will not be beholden to you. I can survive without you clearing land. Should you choose to clear it then that's all well and good, I cannot stop you for I do not interfere with your chances of survival. Should the other animals want to join you then that's their choice also but you cannot say that because you cleared it, it belongs to you and only animals you invite can use it. That is interfering with my chances of survival because it is restricting my land use."

Jack thought for a moment and saw the logic in the deer's words, "Fair enough, you are right in what you say. Though it also means that I retain my right to hunt you if I see you on it for it is just another part of the forest to you."

"I would not have it any other way. It's the only thing that keeps me in trim and makes life interesting," and turned and left.

In another world of creation the Masters of Wisdom had started to take an interest in the situation.

"It looks like the animals have took to the new openings," Sihai said, "Is that worth our interest?"

"They'll keep it clear," Etop said for they were both unaware of the deal Jack had made.

"Quite a freak occurrence all those fires. I haven't seen anything to worry about as yet though."

"No," Sihai said, "It has been a little quiet recently. Maybe I'm just looking out of boredom."

"I thought that double scare would have lasted you an eternity," Etop said with a laugh

"Thinking of this as a rest might relax you."

"I'll bare that in mind," Sihai said, "So why do you think it's so quiet anyway?"



“Man must still be paying off his debt for slaying the dragon,” Etop said, “She will not send any more definers until that is sorted.”

“So it could be a very long time indeed,” Sihai said, “Something like that would take some balancing.”

“My thoughts exactly,” Etop said and left it at that.

### **Chapter 3**

After the deer had left Jack and the rest of the group started cutting and collecting the long grass. The vastness of the cleared land and the speed in which the grass grew meant that the stores were quickly filled. He sent word out that the rest of the clan should do the same and within a Moon it was all complete. Then he met once more with Dina. “You are ready for the winter now I see,” he said by way of greeting, “Good, it is right to plan things out.”

“You mentioned about me needing the cow last time?”

“Yes, but now I think you would be better off with the horse for it is more adapted to the purpose. Speaking of the horse it would make a good carrier. Anything heavy it would manage with ease.”

“I can’t see it wanting to work for me.”

“Why not it is a proud animal and it feels beholden to you. I would think that it would gladly pull its weight.”

“No harm asking and if I ask really nicely it might even carry me.”

“I wouldn’t think so but that’s up to you. Now planning, how about this for one? You divide the cleared land into three. One for the animals, one for the animals winter feed and one for your own feed.”

“Yes that sounds reasonable.”

“Good so back to planting then. Before you can plant anything you must first break the soil,” and with that a crude plough appeared. It was a small tree log with a semi pointed end about six feet long. Attached to it on either side at a thirty degree angle were two thinned logs braced in place by fixing two thinner logs at a forty five degree angle, tied to the big log and to one of the ends of the first thinner log. At the same end the other two logs were tied together. Jack was told that the other ends of the logs were handles and he should put thick twine around the horse and tie the other end to the plough and it would be alright. After that Dina said, “Once that is done walk along the rut that is made and put in your seeds at close distance and then kick the earth back over and your seeds are planted.”

“It that it?”

“Yes let Nature work its course. You just sit back. Though it might be a good idea to water them occasionally but you have pots to carry it in so it won’t be an ordeal.”

“Fair enough and just take them when they have grown.”

“Yes it’s as simple as that. You can plant anything you want when you have their seeds. You need never have to hunt again.”

“Well I don’t know about that,” Jack said with a laugh, “I sort of made a promise I would.”

“Oh the deer you mean,” Dina said with a laugh.

“How did you know that?”

“I am a demon it is my job to know. How else do you think I can advise you?”

“Ah I never thought. So what it said about things being weaker in the spring is that true?”

“Well it is but not for trees though for they have been through many seasons. No if it had carried on it could have done itself an injury. Plants it is talking about, things that grow and die in the same year.”

“I was going to say I did not think it sounded right, and he also said that the Creation myth was just a story.”

“Well it was,” Dina said much to Jack’s surprise, “There was no meeting of the animal spirits at the beginning of things, it did not take place. It was just to make the point that you can only lead through humility for with it you have the Bringer of Light’s blessing. You get to talk to me. You have been given the land to look after though for you are adapted for that purpose, but no, there was no meeting of the animals.”

“Oh I thought it were true, no matter.”

“Anyway that’s as far as I can take you for the time being. You should be alright now.”

“And you? What will you do now?”

“Go back and get reformed for the second cycle and then await my time again.”

“Second cycle, what is that?”

“It is your next time of learning. The cycle goes Fire, Water, Air Earth and then repeats itself bringing new insights at every stage. This is the Earth cycle so my knowledge is about the Earth. The knowledge I have given you should take Man out of the basic survival lifestyle so my job is done,” and with that disappeared.

Jack was up next morning and straight to work on the plough. After he had finished he stepped back to admire it.

“That’s a strange looking thing,” a voice said and Jack turned to see the horse, “What’s it for?”

“It’s to cut the land that we might plant our food. I was just about to see you actually. I was hoping to ask your help in pulling it.”

“Well you have let me stay here so yes, I will help. I don’t quite know how though.”

“I will tie some strong twine to you,” Jack said but could get no further.

”No way, do you think me a fool? You will just make me your prisoner.”

“To what purpose I have pledged not to kill you which I could have done long ago. I only want to borrow you to help me cut the ground that’s all. I have to tie it to you for that is the only way.”

The horse thought awhile and said, “As long as you promise to let me go after you have finished.”

“You have my word,” Jack said and tied the horse to the plough. It took a few times of adjustment before they managed it and when they did Jack said, “Well that’s sorted then,” and untied the horse.

“What? Was that it?”

“It was only a test. It will be three Moons before it is time to use it.”

“Oh, so you won’t need me too often.”

“Only in spring.”

“And in the meantime?”

“Enjoy yourself and save your strength. Well unless you get bored and want to help me some more.”

“I can see myself getting bored life is a lot easier since I came here.”

“Sometimes I might need a hand carrying things and you are much stronger than me.”

“Well as long as you don’t overburden me. You must carry your own weight too for I will not carry you.”

“Oh.”

“What? You were going to ask me to carry you. I will pull that thing that you made and I will carry heavy weights for you for I would say that was a fair swap. Carrying you, forget it I am not your slave.”

“I did not mean to offend you for that is not my way at all,” Jack said changing his tact.

“How can I slave you for you are far too strong for me. Not only are you stronger you are faster too.”

“And cleverer,” the horse said to itself.

“So when I sit on you I too am faster. If I need to go somewhere quickly you could take me occasionally.”

“Like give you a lift you mean as a favour.”

“Yes, that’s right,” Jack said but the horse was wise to him. He knew that if he did it eventually Man would see it as a right and not a privilege and so then it would be a demand. The horse was indeed clever though so it said, “It is true that we are a lot faster than you and if it is seen as only a favour now and again and not a constant demand then I will agree to do it. But I have to warn you that not only are we fast we are also reckless and if you were to ride on us then there would be a good chance of you falling off.”

“No, never.”

“Seriously, we have to jump fallen trees sometimes and beware of hidden obstacles. You would never be able to hold on.”

“I will, honest.”

“No, it’s too much for you,” the horse said and pretended to think awhile before saying, “I will tell you what, as you have been so good to me I will prove it to you. I will allow you to sit on my back but hold on tight for I will try and shake you off. If I cannot shake you off then I will know you can hold on so you will be safe to come on the back.”

“Yes, alright if I can stay on then you will carry me sometimes.”

“Yes, you did say that it was in case you needed to get somewhere in a hurry.”

“True,” Jack said and climbed on the back of the horse. “Are you ready?” the horse said and Jack said he was. “Right,” the horse said and started to buck. After the first throw Jack was on his back and the horse said, “When you can stop on I will know it will be safe to carry you,” and walked off.

A duly embarrassed Jack got up and vowed one day he would ride it. He sent word out and called the council together and showed them the plough and told them what Dina had told him about dividing the land. The clan made and tested their ploughs and then put them away until they were needed. It was a full Moon before that was completed and after it was done Jack thought about Dina and if the truth be known missed him. He longed to go into the depths of the woods again and be at one with himself. He knew that he would have to travel farther than the last time to do this for he and the clan had cleared a substantial tract of it but he thought that he would go visiting so kill two birds with one stone. (I hope you were not holding your breath for that sentence). Adea was keen to go with him so early one morning they both set off and did the rounds. Jack was surprised at how much land had actually been cleared and it took two full days to get to the one farthest out. Night time saw Cali greeting them on their approach, “My king you honour me with your presence.”

“Just a visit Cali my brother,” Jack said, “And a yearning for adventure.”

“Life does get boring without the thrill of hunting,” Cali said, “Sometimes I think that life should not be so easy, it seems to send me lethargic.”

“Me too Cali,” Jack said sadly, “Me too,”

“Maybe,” Cali said and then stopped suddenly before saying, “No matter.”

“What?”

“Well you would think me a fool if I told you I mean I hardly believe it myself.”

“Tell me what?” Jack said intrigued.

“It is mere animal fantasy, no more. I would not embarrass myself nor shame you by mentioning it.”

“Well if its adventure I want to hear it no matter how fantastic it is. In fact I would say that the more fantastic the better for it would make for a better adventure.”

“Then I will tell you but I must say before we start that I don’t believe it myself.”

“Go on,” Jack said slightly impatient.

“Do you remember all those years ago when we were just children and our mother used to warn us not to go into the woods for the Old Man of the Woods would get us.”

“I remember it well,” Jack said with a laugh remembering that it was not that long ago since he himself had gone looking for him.

“Well it appears that one of the animals that has sought shelter with us has seen it.”

“Really, it might be a good idea to have a talk with him. Could you send for him?”

“Sure,” Cali said and it was done. The animal that was sent for turned out to be a sheep. Nervously it approached Jack and said, “Did you wish to see me?”

“Cali was telling me you saw the Old Man of the Woods is it true?”

“I have seen an old man and he was in the woods,” the sheep said, “Though I do not know if it is the man you talk about.”

“And this man are you sure it is not one of us?”

“He is not one of you he has been seen here long before you came.”

“We have been here a long time.”

“No a very long time. That long he has become part of our folklore. He has become an ovine myth.”

“And what do your stories tell about him?”

“Not much for he shuns company. We used to use him to scare our lambs into not straying too far. But I can assure that he does exist for I have seen him myself.”

“When was that?” Jack said expecting it to say a long time past but much to his surprise the sheep said, “Yesterday.”

“Where did you see him?” Jack said his interest well aroused, “Could you take me there?”

“Sure,” the sheep said and took him to the edge of the forest, “he was over there. He was just watching what we were doing. He did not seem too pleased I can tell you.”

“Thank you; you have done me a good service.”

“My pleasure, anything you want of me just ask for I owe you a debt of honour.”

“I’ll bare that in mind,” Jack said and saw traces of disturbance so he had found a trail. He followed it for what seemed like a mile until he saw what looked like a dwelling. He edged in closer but before he got too far heard, “I knew it. It would only be a matter of time,” he turned to see; well he was not quite sure. It was human in shape apart from its pronounced brow and it had the whitest hair that Jack had ever seen, “You do exist.”

“Not for much longer with Man about,” the figure said, “Why couldn’t you leave me in peace?”

“We did not know that you were here who or what are you?”

“I am a Nethal at one time we were many but now we are a few. We weren’t always woodland creatures but that is what we have become.”

“Dina was he one of your kind?”

“Dina, I had a brother of that name but he has long since left to live with our ancestors.”

“I have met him,” Jack said and then remembering him saw a slight similarity to him,

“He looks like you.”

“You have met him; tell me of the circumstances so I might know the truth,”

Jack told him some of the details and when he had finished the figure said, “That is indeed my brother and you must be truly noble that you can speak with the ancestors. What of the others that you bring with you though, are they the same mind?”

“Sorry?”

“Can they speak with the ancestors?”

“No, well I don’t think so anyway.”

“Then it is not safe for me to be here any more I will have to move further in.”

“You are welcome to join us, we mean you no harm.”

“You are a noble man and so have noble intent. You think others are like you but they are not. They have not got your strength of mind so ignobility easily takes over. It is only a matter of time before it happens so I will thank you for your offer but I am afraid I will have to refuse.”

“Is there nothing I can say that will make you want to stay,” Jack said not wanting to let him go.

“I have seen too much of death to want to taste life again but you are most welcome because of your news. How was Dina when you last saw him?”

“Happy, very content. You know it was in this very wood, not far from here when I first saw him. He gave me all his wisdom and said he would have to be reformed before he could come back and disappeared. I hardly knew him but I certainly miss him”

“Yes he was a good one,” the figure said and then, “You say that he gave you all of his wisdom?”

“That is what he said.”

“So he lives through you, you are my brother then.”

“I guess I must be, he mentioned something like that only I think it was live in me.”

“So you are my brother and non more nobler because you can get in touch with your Self. It is a shame that now I know you I have to move on.”

“Surely now that you know that is more reason to stay? Maybe some of his memory might come back.”

“It is not safe.”

“You are the king’s brother, what could be safer?”

“What could be more dangerous? They will see me as a freak and blinded with jealousy it makes a very potent brew. No I am afraid my life has just got more dangerous.”

“Then we part as friends”

“I will leave you a parting gift though, one that you should know.” and with that he introduced Jack to the world of herbal medicine and told him of herbs other uses. Jack then went back to Cali and told him all he knew and the word filtered through the whole

of the clan. After Jack had left the figure changed into Dinu and disappeared.

#### Chapter 4

Two Moons passed and it was the time of the planting. Jack first cleared the ground with fire and then got the plough out. This time the Masters of Wisdom were interested.

“Where did that come from?” Etop said, “I thought you were keeping an eye on them.”

“You told me not to bother,” Sicai said, “See it as a rest you said.”

“That’s it,” Etop said, “It’s all over and it came from nowhere. Those animals were not grazing naturally they had been domesticated. Horse, sheep, cattle, what next? Someone must have told them about the seasons too. Mass forest clearance that was no freak accident, it was planned.”

“It’s not that bad surely,” Sicai said.

“It’s the end of us,” Etop said, “Man has now passed the basic survival stage and so we have served our purpose. We are finished for our purpose was our life. How quickly it came to be too. I will have to go and see of our fate I guess.”

“Seriously?” Sicai said.

“Seriously,” Etop said and disappeared.

“Etop,” the vortex said “I have been expecting you. Your purpose is now served and I thank you for it.”

“What is to happen to us?” Etop said.

“Fear not you are to be reformed that’s all. You will have some time before I call you so enjoy.”

“And Man what is to happen to him?”

“He will blunder on but hopefully he will get there in the end.”

“No I mean what will happen to him for slaying the dragon. I thought that he was being punished.”

“You were meant to, it seems that you have been trying to hinder progress instead of help it. Your dealings with Dol of the clan Phin left a lot to be desired.”

“He was evolving out of balance we lost the secret of mental fire because of it. I deemed it necessary for he could have done a lot of damage.”

“I know of your motives and of your true motives as well. Why do you think I sent two out at the same time?”

“I did wonder.”

“No matter now man has achieved this stage despite you.”

“Oh,” Etop said getting worried.

“No matter it is done. You may return until I call you,” and Etop obeyed.

He returned back to Sicai in a foul mood, “We’re done for. Our destiny is well marked. I wouldn’t mind but she’s only gone and let Man off for killing the dragon. Where’s the balance that’s what I want to know? It’s one law for us and another for Man.”

“No it doesn’t sound balanced,” Sicai said, “How long have we got?”

“She said she will call us when she’s ready so it’s only a matter of time.”

“I will keep a very close eye on that Jack first thing and we will stamp on him.”

“It will have to be quick,” Etop said and the conversation ended.

As Jack cut his first furrow a strange feeling came over him. It was very uplifting and so he stopped to enjoy it. He had, had feelings of lift before from the Sun but this was a different one. It seemed to come from within him and it was quite a joy to behold.

“What’s the matter,” the horse said, “Has that thing broken again?”

“Oh no I just stopped awhile to take it all in,” reluctant to mention the energy surge inside him.

“Yes, it can be overpowering,” the horse said much to Jack’s surprise.

“You know about it?”

“Sure, it’s common knowledge,” the horse said thinking that Jack also knew, “You are very lucky to be able to receive it I can tell you.”

“So. Er. What is it?”

The horse looked at him strangely and said, “You don’t know what it is. Is this some sort of joke?”

“No I’m perfectly serious. I have never had anything the like of it before. It’s very uplifting.”

“It is the Earth Mother she is thanking you for the service you are giving her.”

“What, I did not realise that I was.”

“You are tending the Earth that was the purpose given to you by her.”

“And she is thanking me for it so what actually is it? It feels like some sort of warmth.”

“It is her energy she is giving up her knowledge to you and with it comes peace. You are indeed lucky for with those waters of life you are truly blessed.”

“I’m not sure about that for it is no good to me as I cannot understand it.”

“It’s not you that it goes to it goes to the part of her that is within you. Through you upholding your purpose she lives and grows in you but I have heard that if you close your eyes and listen you enter a higher state of awareness and can then understand it.”

Jack closed his eyes and tried, it was quiet for awhile but Jack was persistent and soon he could hear it.

“Life is all about cycles set in motion at the true beginning of things. First is the great cycle that brings us knowledge and through it life. This consists of three smaller cycles that radiate around the elements getting progressively purer by level of development. You have stage one Fire Water Air and Earth. Stage two Fire Water Air and Earth. Stage three Fire Water Air and Earth.”

Jack told the horse what he had heard and recalled Dina mentioning something about it but he did not understand it so it was no good to him consciously. To the Masters on the other hand it was music to their ears.

“Got him,” Sicaï said, “He’s out of balance.”

“That was quick,” Etop said, “Right. We’ll get to work immediately. We need to turn him into another creature so what about some ideas?”

“I would say a hunter,” Dah said, “Though as he was humble not a great one” and started laughing.

“Excellent,” Etop said, “And what about this one? Now he has received the waters of life he needs water no longer and so will never thirst.”

“That’s positively vicious,” Dah said, “You should be ashamed of yourself.”

“He’ll get his water from his food,” Etop said, “Don’t worry. Where I’m sending him it will be a distinct advantage.”

“I suppose so,” Dah said and the jackal came to be.

## The Fall

News of Jack's fate quickly got back and Etop was summoned to the Earth Mother. No longer the great vortex she had transformed into beauty incarnate and looked like, well you've been in love. You tell me.

"Etop," She said, "I thought I told you to take a rest."

"I had good reason he had evolved out of balance."

"I know your reason and I know your real reason. You will lose your power of isolation and adaption for you have proved yourself unwise."

"You punish me what about Man? He slayed the dragon and you paid him no notice."

"I reasoned that he is to suffer enough, it will soon be time for my purge."

To anyone reading this and wondering about the purge I will now explain it. The Earth Mother, god love her is like any good mother. She does not like seeing things going to waste and with that in mind she clears the atmosphere. It purifies the air and brings down minerals from the stratosphere so that nothing goes to waste. It happens every 70,000 years or so because it is on a cycle. Now to do this she shoots material high into the sky. This spreads out around the world and falls to Earth bringing with it impurities. It is an efficient method but it has a drawback. It wipes out most of the life beneath it for it blocks the Sun so nothing can grow.

"I did not realise," Etop said.

"The real reason for my hurry, Man needed all his basic survival skills as he has a rocky road ahead."

"I did not realise," Etop repeated.

"They would have been wiped out without them. You came very close to doing it. No matter, they are ready now. Now the dragon you expressed concern, although it was not your place to do so, about its retribution. I am glad you did for it means that you care. The dragon was actually put in place to protect Man so with its demise they no longer had its protection."

"I thought it was created in case Man fell from grace to protect you from him."

"I know," She said with a smile that lit up creation, "You were meant to. She was created to protect Man from you so your concern over her demise is a bit misplaced. Anyway Man does not need her now, nor you I'm afraid. He has passed basic survival and so now can sit back and look at the world around him. For that you will have to be reformed to help him with his purpose. You will receive fresh instruction to help get Man through that stage. Though Man will not be ready for you for quite a while."

"Why is that?"

"It just happened to fall that way the devastation caused by my purge will make it that he will not be ready for his next stage. Not only that the great cycle will have to go right around again before he is ready once more. You are talking a very long time indeed."

"And when they are ready? What is my new purpose?"

"That will be revealed to you when you are ready to hear it as too the dragon for you need to have balance."

"Oh."

"Nothing ever dies or goes to waste, have you forgotten?"

"Every time you reform me you take out my memory, it is not my fault."

"Alright, anyway before you are reformed I have one last task for you. We are about to enter a new reality. From now on animals will not be able to communicate between



species. Your job is to make it so.”

“By your command.”

Time past and Jack and Adea’s existence was forgotten. Man lost his power of communication with the animals and as that was also wiped from the collective memory he did not even realise that he once had it. The Earth Mother’s purge came and it was cataclysmic. Man was decimated, very few survived but some did. They regrouped and reorganised and started again. It was basic survival, no more. Some of the animals stayed with them out of instinct but most fled back to their previous existence for when it came to basic survival it was every animal for itself. Some men took to caves and lived in small isolated communities. These fell from grace and their small gene pool made them stunted and deformed but that was a lot further down the road so I will back track a little.

Man, by the time he had regrouped and grew again missed his next instruction. He was still clever and rational but with no new breakthroughs he could only work with what he had. With his powers of refinement he achieved a degree of comfort but the severe weather conditions still made life difficult.

Cycle after cycle came but there were no elementals to pass it on for it would have been a waste of time. The three turns and a fall cycle was not in operation but with the environment as it was it made little difference. The three turns and a fall cycle? Did I not mention that? Oh sorry. Imagine a turning wheel with the four elements as the compass points. You are on the wheel while the elements remain static. You start at Earth (east) and turn clockwise through Fire, Water Air before falling down to Earth to start again. These falls generally involve population culls for Man in normal circumstances is quite a prolific breeder. They might be small and localised like a large volcano destroying the dominant culture or large and widespread like an ice age like the one during the Earth Mothers purge and involve a drop in intelligence. So basically you have a disaster and a drop in intelligence and have to start again. Incidentally if you put the wheel next to a larger wheel with twelve points you have the three stages of development. This is the symbol of infinity and if you have not quite worked out what it is, it is precession.

# Man-The learning years

## 1. Bruga's Story

“Step forward Etop and bring all your kin for reformation is in the air,” the vortex said and the Masters of Wisdom entered the Creative Cauldron. Once there had been Etop, Dah, Aam, Gobcos, Finites, Sicai, Sihai and Siscai but now all there was, was alphabet soup. The vortex then reformed her original spell and found there had been a design flaw. It had stuttered twice on one of the words so the Masters had developed self-consciousness. It should have said 'cosmic assistance I had is the basis of hope I tag' but it had stuttered on both the 'I's which had enhanced it even more. It removed the 'I's that were extra and put it all back and stirred. The mass would have to be reduced for it wanted it to have less power so it could no longer isolate and adapt. With that in mind it took out the letters that spelt 'basic mass' and stirred the pot once more. It had not told Etop that the dragon could not be reformed for it had been mentally killed because it knew that, that would be coming out of the pot and thus another drain on his power. It took the letters out that spelled 'a species aid' and stirred the pot once more. It took the remaining letters out and spelt 'insight of hoc' and as its work was now complete for a while it left itself 'a patio'.

It is now a full cycle since Jack's metamorphosis and though some things have stagnated other things have moved on. New tools have been evolved through adaption to new usage and there was now a myriad of different flint tools and stone axes that required some skill to use them. Man lost his own home made shelters and still dwelt in caves occasionally though his nomadic nature meant this was not very often. Agriculture had fallen from grace because of the climate left by the Earth Mother's purge and had long been forgotten. The scarcity of prey meant Man had to travel longer distances to hunt and the harsh landscape and climatic conditions made life short and kept Man's numbers well down. As time marched by the ice subsided a little and populations rose although not substantially. The further distance that Man travelled the more the world opened up to him and soon he met other tribes. These were not men though, these were like men and could talk like men but they were of another branch of Man. The story I am about to relate is about one such meeting. It was between Bruga, ex of the clan Kinti and a Themo. It was a cold summer's day and Bruga was making his way through a rocky out crop on his way home from a hunt. He was empty handed, which was nothing unusual for it was quite desolate, and not in too good of a mood for it was not the first day of his hunger. The sound of falling stones made him turn around quickly only to see a figure dart into hiding. Thinking it an ambush he got an arrow from his set and got it ready by his bow “Who are you?” he shouted, “What do you want of me?”

“I am just passing through,” a voice shouted back, “I mean you no harm nor am I spying.”

“Then why are you hiding?” Bruga shouted with suspicion, “Come out and show yourself.”

“I fear you will kill me,” the voice shouted, “For I am not off your kind.”

“What?” Bruga shouted, “What is this? What do you mean not of my kind, do you mean you are of a different clan? Come out now and stop playing around.”

“Do you promise not to kill me?” the voice shouted.

“Yes sure,” Bruga shouted, “You have my word.”

From behind the rock from where the voice had come a figure appeared and started to come over. It was a little smaller than Bruga with a more pronounced jawbone and it held a small spear that matched its size. Bruga had seen nothing like it before. He watched its approach and studied it as it got closer.

He did not really know what to say except, "What are you?"

"I am a Themo," the figure said, "I have seen your kind before. You are new to the order of things."

"This order yes," Bruga said, "We are from past the mountains but hunger drove us here."

"Food is scarce all round I fear," the figure said, "But you are welcome to a share of what we have got."

"I have not eaten in three days," Bruga said, "I thank you for that offer and I will gladly accept it."

"My name is Dryga," the figure said, "I do not live too far if you would care to follow."

"Bruga," Bruga said and did as he was asked. He found himself in a small complex of caves that looked too ornate to be natural. Another figure of smaller stature met them at the entrance. "This is Beana," Dryga said and introduced them. She went to the back of the cave and came back with some strange shaped food that Bruga found tasty and hunger made him take to it with relish.

"What was it?" Bruga said after he had finished, "It tasted very good."

"Food. That is all we call it."

"Doesn't that get confusing? How do you know what to eat?"

"We are shown, it is not important."

"Shown, shown by who?"

"Our elders, the Earth Mother, it is not important."

"The Earth Mother," Bruga said in surprise.

"Yes sometimes, she tells us though, not shows."

"You are in touch with the Earth Mother. However did you manage that?"

"We always have been, we know nothing else."

"And she shows you where to get the food from."

"Food, medicine. All our needs, she tells us and we take it."

"Well its very good anyway and does it grow far from here?"

"Not too far, a little walk, no more."

"Would you show me? If it grows well enough that is for I don't want to take it if it's needed."

"There is other food, it is not important. But stay awhile and tell me of your ways for I am curious to know about you."

"Well I wouldn't really know where to begin. What do you actually want to know?"

"Are there many of you, are you camped close by. I have many questions."

"And I few answers, I am on my own because I have been made an outcast."

"Are you a bad man?"

"Foolish maybe but not bad, my brother and I fought over another woman and as he was the king I had to leave."

"King is that like an elder?"

"Probably, I am not sure of your ways."

"Our elders are our leaders; they guide us on our path and help us with our judgements."

“Pretty similar, oh, and they lead us out to war.”

“War, what is war?”

“War. Er,” Bruga said and thought awhile, “Its defending your clan against another I suppose.”

“Do you mean like a game?”

“A game, no there can be a lot of killing so I would not call it that.”

“Our people do not kill the Earth Mother does not allow it. How is it that you do not hear her then? Is it because you kill?”

“I don’t know,” Bruga admitted but then turned it back and said, “But you carry a spear. You must kill too.”

“It is for reaching into the trees and a symbol of our people to show when they become adult. It is not used for killing for that is against our law. It was never designed for it.”

“You have laws,” Bruga said in surprise.

“Everyone has law that is what rules our lives. Every action has a reaction for a start.”

“What? I’ve not heard that before.”

“Look at things and you will see it that is our basic law, the one we look to the most. We live our lives like that and the Earth Mother looks to us with favour.”

“And other laws?”

“No one is greater lest he be more humble and look to others as you would like to be looked to yourself.”

“Right, any more?”

“That is enough that covers all the things we need laws for so it will suffice.”

“We have many laws it is quite a complicated thing the law is.”

“It shouldn’t be, it has to be understood. Tell me some of yours so I might see what you mean.”

“You cannot kill a clan member that is instant death. If you kill a member from another clan when not at war it goes to both Kings judgement. If found that you had no good reason that’s instant death. You cannot steal another man’s weapons, woman or tools. You cannot refuse to fight when your clan is at war nor can you refuse to go on a hunt if it is long distance. There are many more as we are a pretty complicated people but that is a sample of it.”

“Look to others as you would be looked at contains all that. It makes life easier I find.”

“It’s too vague for us. It has to be defined so we can sort out the retribution. Some things are more serious than others.”

“Retribution I thought that was the domain and purpose of Natural Justice.”

“Natural Justice, I have not heard that before. What’s Natural Justice?”

“Every action has a reaction that is how we live our lives.”

“We will have to agree to differ on that for, for the life of me I cannot see it. I see nothing of this Natural Justice in action. Maybe, as you say I need to look deeper into things but to the best of my knowledge I cannot recall it.”

“Now you know that it exists you will find it but that is a matter for time now. So these others I have seen. They are not with you.”

“It is a good two Moons since I was cast out. That was a long way off so I don’t think they are from our clan. But tell me what they look like and I might know them.”

“Ah, I don’t mean offence but at this stage of our friendship if I might make so bold, I hardly know you so you all look the same to me.”

“Really?” Bruga said not offended because he was curious himself. “Not being funny myself but if I saw a few of you together I don’t think that I could tell you apart either. Do you think that will change when I get to know you?”

“Undoubtedly you don’t know me and so you think I am just another animal. Animals all look the same except to each other but if you look more closely you will see that they are different.”

“Right yes I can see that. But how would getting to know you change all that?”

“Well two ways really but they are mutually connected. The first you see that I have a personality and so I am not an animal. And secondly as I am not an animal you lose all preconceptions of what I am to you get to the point of saying he’s not like the others. This happens over time until you finally get to know me. When you get to know me you see me as a fellow brother through life and you will look closer and see the difference between me and my fellow Themo.”

“Yes I can see that but why should that be?”

“It came to be that way it was the dropping of a cloud.”

“Sorry?”

“At one time all animals could speak to each other and as such they knew that each one was a brother. Brother killed brother to eat but it was recognised that it had to be that way for they had to find their place in the Grand Design.”

“I never knew that and the cloud was when they stopped. Why was that then?”

“I’m not sure but I do know that when it did animals lost their trust of each other. They were no longer brothers and with no common language between them they could not understand each other and so had to rely on what their perceptions told them and react accordingly. Without that bond of brotherhood any judgement comes out of ignorance and so is more likely to be flawed. Without that bond of brotherhood you see me as a forest and not a tree.”

“So when I get to know you I will see you as a brother.”

“When you get to know me you will see me as myself but when you truly get to know me you will see me as your Self.”

“Sorry? I was up with you until then.”

“When you truly get to know me then you will understand. These men that I saw, one of them had white hair while the other two had black, I don’t know if that’s any good but it’s the best I can do.”

“White hair, what were they doing?”

“Looking around searching for something. I guess that is what you call hunting.”

“Yes, but who I wonder for one sounds like my brother.”

“Is he looking for you, maybe he wants to reopen that bond?”

“My body more likely we have never got on. He has vowed to kill me for he thinks I want to be King.”

“Why should that be, why should being his brother effect his kingship?”

“Well I could rule instead of him, we are of the same bloodline.”

“Oh so it is passed through a family.”

“Yes,” Bruga said slightly surprised, “Is that not the same with you?”

“No our elders are picked for their experience and ability to counsel. I mean what would happen if a king proved unsound?”

”Well if he’s bad I guess they would just replace him, kill him if he was really bad.”

“You said something about a fight over a woman is that the reason you think he has come for you?”

“No, it’s just an excuse, he’s after killing me.”

“Does he kill so easily?”

“Most men do I’m afraid it seems part of our nature. You should be safe though. It’s me he’s after.”

“I’m not so sure, if he kills so easily then surely it is just a matter of time.”

“No, not you you’re safe.”

“To you but to you I am not like the rest of the animals. To him I am.”

“Oh,” Bruga said seeing the logic, “I am sorry. I fear that I might have brought trouble to you.”

“It was only a matter of time, it is not important.”

“I don’t know about that he is a good tracker. He could quite easily find here.”

“I would be long gone it is no bother.”

“He is quiet too you will never hear him.”

“I don’t have to the animals will tell me.”

“You can talk to the animals?”

“Only silently, they will tell me if they get close. I will be long gone before they get here.”

“How can you do that?”

“I have always been able to do it so the question did not come up; it’s like me asking why you can’t.”

“True it would be a good thing to have though.”

“I don’t see it as such it is just another ability.”

“So how many abilities do you have?”

“It’s all part of the same one, the Earth Mothers line makes it all possible. As she can talk to me I guess she can talk to any animal. It helps me understand the place around me so I can live a better life in it.”

“Definitely a thing worth having.”

Dryga went quiet suddenly before saying “Beana danger” and turning to Bruga, “Would you care to follow me. Your brother is on his way.”

“I will have to face him but I will not bring trouble to your place so it will keep awhile,” and followed Dryga and Beana out of the caves and into a hidden great cavern.

“They say that the Earth Mother herself used to live here,” Dryga said.

“It looks big enough” Bruga said looking around in admiration.

“We come here in times of trouble no tracker will ever find it.”

“I hope not but he is a very good tracker. He was the clans best.”

“No one will ever find it for I have made it that no one can see the entrance.”

“When was that?” I did not see you cover it and it was a fairly big entrance.”

“I have put a spell on it, it blinds them to reality.”

“You can do that? You have this ability?”

“I did not realise that it was one, can’t you do it then?”

“I wish, so you probably have other things you can do as well then?”

“I don’t know what you can do so I can’t really say but if you think of that as an ability then I probably have more.”

“And these come from the line to the Earth Mother?”

“She told me the spells through the line.”  
“Has she told you anything else?”  
“Many things but it is safe to go back now.”

## Chapter2

“He’s around here somewhere I can smell him,” Dega said in the complex of caves, “Dito scout around the back and look for signs. Lem check the front for the same. He cannot be far away.”

“It’s three quarters of a Moon now,” Lem said, “Shouldn’t we be turning back?”

“When I am ready,” Dega said, “He’s close, I can feel it. We were born of the one time and have that bond.”

“But what of our families?” Dito said, “It’s been too long.”

“We’re close,” Dega said, “Believe me.”

They searched around for awhile but found nothing.

“It was just a waste of time,” Lem said, “Is it really worth the struggle?”

“He’s dishonoured me,” Dega said, “And as you are supposed to be my champion is that a question you should really be asking?”

“I am your champion,” Lem said, “And as such I will have to fight him. Though I question whether he dishonoured you for from what you have told me I can’t see where.”

“That is true,” Dito said, “I think you make too much of it.”

“I am your king,” Dega said, “You don’t think you do.”

“Don’t give me that divine rite nonsense,” Dito said. “I mean when is the last time you consorted with a demon?”

“You go too far,” Dega said and turning to Lem, “How can you stand there and let me get disdained in such a manner. Are you not my champion?”

“What,” Lem said, “But he’s my brother.”

“The clan is bigger than the family,” Dega said, “You understood that when you took the oath.”

“No,” Lem said, “I won’t. I can’t do it.”

“You know what will happen if you break the oath,” Dega said, “It is sacred. Your ember will never re-ignite.”

To anyone reading this the belief of the Kinti clan was that the body was tinder and the life force an ember. Once the tinder had burned out the ember remained to be fed once again by the Master of Fire in the sky. This had replaced the previous belief that the Sun was the Bringer of Light (over ruled at a synod organised by the clans of Con and Gress). It was basically a threat of mental death, the worst possible thing to swear on. Now the Kinti were very spiritually aware and so took the threat very seriously. “Don’t make me do this,” Lem said, “Please, he is my brother.”

“What does that mean?” Dega said, “You are here to kill a brother anyway and we won’t be going home until you do.”

Lem looked at Dito who said, “I will not fight you; you will have to kill me before I do.”

Lem looked at Dega who said, “That should make it easier. Do it.”

Lem got himself ready and Dito on seeing this had a change of heart about fighting. They circled each other like lions on spring. Lem prodded with his spear trying to gauge the distance but Dito parried back blocking and side batting with the spear head. It was tame at first but soon got intense and savage. On and on they fought each other sustaining

minor injuries until Dito fell and the cause was justed.

“I will never forgive you for that,” Lem said.

“As long as you just forget,” Dega said, “Now let’s double back on the trail and see if he’s done the same” and went off back on man hunt.

When Bruga and the Themos arrived back they saw Dito’s dead body and Dryga said, “Do you know him?”

“It is Dito. He is from our clan.”

“They come to kill you and end up killing each other. See there is Natural Justice at work.”

“They are very volatile people. It could happen at any time, there must have been a reason for it.”

“It is not the cause for that was beyond their control.”

“What?”

“Whatever reason they used it was one given to them by the Earth Mother. You may not hear her but she is still there within you.”

“What about free will? We control our own mind.”

“You think you do but mother knows best. Her magnetic fields controls moods.”

“So she can work through you as well as talk to you? But what of this carnage I apologise sincerely.”

“It is no big thing and it also means you have one less enemy, maybe they will go now?”

“Maybe though I think Dega an ardent pursuer so I will not live in hope. I will bury him anyway so he does not foul the air any longer,” and did as he had said. When it was finished he came back to the cave and reluctant to leave they both continued with their conversation.

“So this spell then,” Bruga said after they had settled, “How do you do it?”

“Me? I cannot do it. I ask the Earth Mother and she does it for me.”

“Changes things?”

“No, only the appearance of things. She changes the imagination slightly so you think you see things, well more precisely you think you don’t see things for you imagine they are not there.”

“Right I can understand it. And you just ask her and she does it for you.”

“Yes she is all giving.”

“Amazing and you can just ask her anything?”

“Anything that won’t harm anyone else.”

“What about Dito? He came to harm.”

“I didn’t ask her she was only acting out Natural Justice. No, if I ask for something bad to happen I fall under Natural Justice and so get it back. I would actually be cursing myself”

“I never realised, you know I might look deeper into this Natural Justice thing.”

“It could change your life.”

Elsewhere the conversation was being watched by the Earth Mother and hoc. “See how they get on,” she said, “My children can bond.”

“But they share a common language,” hoc said, “It has reactivated their bond.”

“Well yes. But it is good that they could live together. Now that was one of my main concerns.”

“Them maybe but I fear that not all men are like Bruga.”

“He was one of my better ones,” she said allowing a little pride of purpose slip through.



“It is a shame they are not all like that.”

“Give them time to grow they will shine through in the end.”

“May I ask you something?”

“Sure go ahead.”

“They mentioned about animals being able to talk to each other, why did you change that?”

“Many reasons, Man had to rule alone. Most of the animals are cleverer and with man’s humble nature they would soon be his master. I needed the energy for my last purge and so had to conserve it. I could go on but I think you understand me.”

“Well except for the part about Man being humble by nature of course,” hoc said and started laughing.

“Behave; I think I preferred it with Etop.”

“Well I’ve reformed,” hoc said and the scene changed to one with a less friendlier atmosphere.

“I did not need to kill him,” Lem said, “There was no real reason for it.”

“It is done now forget it,” Dega said.

“I can’t just forget it. He was my brother. I am not like you.”

“You go too far you should know your place.”

“I have killed my brother for you; you should at least have the decency to treat me like a fellow man. Tell me, what is it about you and your brother? I have watched you grow up with an intense hatred for him, why don’t you get on?”

“You dare to ask me a question,” Dega said but thought better and said, “Very well. As you said it cost you a brother. He was always more humble than me.”

“What? Is that it?”

“That means a lot to me.”

“You can run faster, throw a spear further, track better, fire an arrow better do all those things and you would rather be humble.”

“You don’t know what I know. There are certain secrets that are only for kings and besides I’ve always had this uneasy feeling about. No, I’ve said enough. There are some things better left unsaid.”

“You have intrigued me now for the life of me I cannot see humility as an asset.”

“How little you know,” Dega said angrily, “It is only by being humble do you get to consort with a demon.”

“So you mean that anyone who is humble can get to talk to a demon. So what of this divine rite?”

“It exists, you have to be humble and of bloodline.”

“And do you think that because he is more humble than you he has a better claim to be king.”

“No, it only goes to the eldest son. You should know that.”

“I thought but you seem to think of him as a rival to be king. You are the eldest so that cannot be. Well unless.”

“Unless what?” Dega said angrily.

“Unless you think that he is the eldest,” Lem said without fear, “For that is the only conclusion that I can think of.”

Dega went quiet for awhile before saying, “We were born in a storm and everything was hectic. There was no mix up though; it was just that it left a little doubt,”

Dega's soul bearing did not have the desired effect for Lem turned and said, "So I killed my brother and you might not even be the true king. If you are not the true king then that oath is not binding and its divine curse inactivable."

"But I am a true king," Dega said angrily.

"Then summon a demon."

"I am not to be tested, that is not the place of my champion."

"It you are not the true king then I am not your champion. Not only that if you are not the true king then you are an ordinary man. Well with one exception, you are a man that is responsible for the death of my brother. Now if you are a true king you will be able to summon a demon. If you cannot then I will know you are just a man."

"You know that I cannot summon a demon it was just a myth to enhance our prestige. No king has ever been able to summon a demon. If I cannot summon a demon it does not mean that I am not a true king for no king can."

"And the secrets of kingship that you keep mentioning they don't exist do they?"

"Oh they do, they have been handed down through my family since time first began."

"So basically you are trying to tell me that you hold the power of life and death over someone because you have a few old secrets."

"Those old secrets as you put them were given by the Master of Fire. He said that in time when they are understood they will bring great goodness to man."

"I would have to hear them to make judgement for myself so perhaps you can tell me them."

"What give up the secrets of kingship to a non bloodline? What do you take me for?"

"A man bargaining for his life, now if you were an ordinary man I would be obligated to take your life for what you have done. If you say you are the king because you have some old secrets I want to hear these secrets to try and find out what makes you think that you are better than me."

"I will never give up my secrets only to my son."

"You do not quite understand. If I cannot hear them no one else will hear them either," and putting his spear to Dega's throat, "So if I was you I would tell me what you know"

"I am not scared of death that is the mark of a true king."

"No, maybe not but you are scared of losing power when I kill you who will tell your son. The secret ends there and with it the family kingship. Think wisely for is that not also the mark of a true king," Dega saw he was cornered and had very little choice, he said, "If I tell you, then what?"

"Depends on what they sound like."

"You mean to kill me to avenge my action with your brother. I know and except that but not for me, for the clan Kinti I would ask a service of you."

"Go on."

"If you do kill me will you tell the secrets to my son so the clan name lives on? Promise me that and I will tell all I know."

"On my honour."

"Fair enough," Dega said and related the secrets one by one so anyway. What? Do you want to hear them? Well alright. "Now as I said these secrets when understood will be beneficial to us. But at the minute they are not understood and so may sound strange."

"Alright," Lem said impatiently.

"The first one is that the world is round."

“So what’s a world then? And what possible use to us would it be knowing that it is round? You’ll have to do better than that.”

“I told you that it would sound strange it is not the time yet.”

“Go on,”

“Well that only a humble man can consort with a demon that was the second one. The third one was that the universe was only illusionary and it will re manifest once its purpose is served.”

“Universe?”

“Haven’t a clue, spiritualism defines reality and materialism refines reality. The fifth one said that man was destined to live forever. The sixth said that within him walks the Earth Mother. The seventh he is to achieve mastery of the land and finally he has the power to fly.”

“Was that it? Fly that is just fantasy and all the other stuff, well the bits I understood, non sense. And you have all that power because you know that. It sounds like I have been living a lie and if that is all that I champion there is no honour for myself.” As Lem was talking Dega out of sight drew his flint dagger and awaited his time.

“So what is to become of me, what happens now?”

“Now?”

“I have told you my secrets; you said that you would decide on my fate afterwards.”

“You lost me my brother but I guess you also lost your own. I will let you go. I will not come back with you for the obvious reasons but also because I think it’s a sham. Will you give me your word as a true king that you will not come after me?”

“I promise.”

Lem lowered the spear and said, “Very well. You may go.”

Quick as lightening Dega plunged the dagger into his stomach and said, “Do you really think that you can listen to the secrets of kings and get away with it?”

“The promise of a true king, now I know that I am well out of it,” and fell to the floor weak but still alive.

“We are descended from Phin,” Dega mocked, “You mortals never realise that. Secrets, you want secrets. I will give you secrets. Kinti was not the rightful king; he won it with the prowess of his spear. What about that for a secret then? Secrets can you handle them for I have plenty more. Do you want some more? Yes, Bruga was the eldest child and I will not go back until I know him dead for I want to bury him myself. More, what about this one then? I can talk to demons for I am a king; they torture me every night telling me I’m not the true king. I know I am though and I am the king so it must be right. Yes demons, I know all about demons, they occupy most of my waking hours. You are not the king they say; you’ll be found out and made to look a fool. They will probably kill you for your lies. You don’t deserve this, you don’t deserve that. I don’t need to summon up a demon; I have them with me all the time. Yes you are better off out of it and so would I be if I had the nerve. Maybe when Bruga is no more the voices will go for I would have proved myself to them, I don’t know. But I tell you this, I will not leave here until I have finished Bruga off once and for all, secrets yes I’ve got my fill of them. Every king that keeps the secret is cursed because it should not be a secret. Ironic isn’t it, the very thing that gives you the power curses you to unhappiness. Secrets, yes, I’ve got secrets, you want some more?”

I could carry on but it went on for a considerable time. In fact by the time he had finished

Riga Mortis had set in.

### Chapter 3

Unaware of Lem's demise Bruga and Dryga carried on with their conversation.

"Well I was looking for something different I must admit," Bruga said, "Since I left the clan I have no roots. Life is lonely sometimes I guess. So how could I get these abilities?"

"I don't know, I have always had them so they were never won. I guess you are not adapted for them otherwise you would have them."

"You mentioned changing your life though I thought that you meant getting those abilities."

"No I meant with Natural Justice. You look at life differently and it seems to soothe your temper."

"Oh, well yes, I think I recognise it so I will give it a go."

"You are welcome to stay with us a while, it might take away some of your loneliness"

"I will thank you for the offer but I have a place. Though if you would allow it, I would like to come and visit."

"Sure and if you are not too busy tomorrow I will take you out and show you my world"

"Your world?"

"Yes everything around us. I will show you what you can eat and get medicine from. You can live here comfortably then."

"You know that's a good idea, if you don't mind for I don't want to put you out"

"No bother to me but I will ask one thing of you."

"Yes?"

"Never put a name to anything I show you, once you do it can be identified and so more people get to know about it. You are welcome to tell others what I have told you but tell them the same as I have told you so not too many people get to know it. Don't forget that anyone you tell might be a potential competitor in times of need and detract from your ability to survive. Bare that in mind and you should live long and prosper."

"I never thought about it in that way before. You know you are right. It is us that are the stupid ones. I'm starting to see things a little clearer now."

"Good, things should start getting a little easier then. You'll settle in here quickly you'll see."

"And the other animals, anything I should know that might help me get on with them?"

"Well I'll put the message out to the other animals to tell them you are a good animal; there is one that you might be a little wary of."

"Really who's that?"

"It is Tigon, he is a predator. The only one in the area so he thinks he owns it. He might not look too kindly to you coming on the scene."

"And what is he?"

"Sorry?"

"What sort of animal is he?"

"I don't know I never asked him."

"And do you think that he will turn nasty?"

"Hard to say, he will probably be alright as you are just on your own. Too many more though and things will change."

"Is he dangerous?"

“I would say that he could be very dangerous, he has razor sharp teeth and claws well they can rip down trees.”

“He must be quite some size then maybe I should go and see him and see how the land lies.”

“Well I could come along I could put in a good word for you and also translate so you can understand him.”

“That would be good, thank you. Yes, it is only manners that I should visit him and introduce myself.”

“Yes, I think he would respect you for that. He would do the same I guess.”

“Then tomorrow, I guess I must go back now. I think I have wasted enough of your time”

“You are welcome to stay as long as you want my time is never wasted when I talk to you. You live in a world so alien to mine, I find it fascinating.”

“I will tell you all about it one day after all you have shown me yours.”

“Then tell me how you came to be, stay a while for I am interested.”

“Well alright and then I really must go” he made himself comfortable and began. “In the beginning the Master of Fire came down to the Earth Mother and between them they created man. They told him that as he was the cleverest, the strongest and fastest he should rule over the land and all the animals. The greatest of all men they created as kings and gave them secrets and let them communicate with demons who would show them how to get mastery over the land.”

“Well that’s one way of looking at it, I suppose.”

“Oh, don’t worry since I have met you all that has fallen to nothing masters of the land. I doubt it.”

“They are just stories made up by arrogant, ignorant people.”

“Tell me of yours for I bet it was closer to the mark.”

“Very well, Father Fire shone on Mother Earth and from this union all life began. There have been many worlds since but the one that concerns us was the fourth world. This is the world that our grandfather came to be. He had many sons, far too many to look after so the Earth Mother asked for two of them. She said that she would look after them and treat them like her own children. He could not refuse her for she was the one that sustained him in life but that meant that he had to let down her sister, the Moon and this upset her. She had no children of her own you see. She cried and her tears are carried on grandfathers back as a reminder of his dishonour of breaching his promise. The Earth Mother took the sons and changed them so that they could live better. They then split up and were left to make their way across the land. Our father brought us here and that is how we came to be.”

“And the other what happened to it?”

“I guess you are one although I do not know for sure.”

“Your father you mean your clan father?”

“He was the clan father but he was also my father.”

“Then how many cycles have you travelled or haven’t you been here that long?”

“I have been here a very long time more cycles than I care to mention. I am timeless”

“What, do you mean that you cannot die?”

“I can die but only if someone kills me.”

“You must have seen some strange things.”

“Many, I will tell you about it sometime.”

“Yes, I would like to hear it,” Bruga said getting up, “ will come first thing in the morning. Thank you for your company, it was noble” and left the complex. Bruga travelled the short distance home and was soon in the Netherworld before him stood hoc and the Earth Mother.

“I thought that it was about time that I made myself known to you,” the Earth Mother said, “You are coming along well and making good progress. This is hoc, he is your mentor and guide. We have marked you out as a man of note and so we will be keeping an eye on you.”

“I thank you for your kindness,” Bruga said, “But I am a little confused. Would you mind telling me what this is all about?”

“You are to be a king,” hoc said, “A definer. Through you man will get a little closer to his purpose.”

“I don’t want to be a king from what I have seen of it I shun it. It is ignoble and self seeking. Besides I have a brother who is the king.”

“I mean a true king, your kingdom will be the land and your subject the animals.”

“I’m sure they would like that, most of them hate us as it is.”

“I will sort it out with the animals,” the Earth Mother said, “You’ll have no trouble there.”

“And my brother?” Bruga said, “I am sure he would like that also.”

“That too is being sorted,” hoc said, “He has been given the spinning wheel, it will drive him to his own destruction.”

“The spinning wheel,” Bruga said, “What is that?”

“There are some things better left unsaid,” hoc said.

“No, it is alright,” the Earth Mother said, “Nothing is to be hidden from him.”

“Very well,” hoc said, “Your mind works in cycles that progress around the elements and these change your moods. We just speeded it up that’s all. Faster and faster like a spinning vortex until well, you just tear yourself apart.”

“Sounds painful I would not wish it on my worst enemy, let alone my twin brother.”

“But you haven’t, he wished it upon himself. Remember that as you are responsible for your actions you are also responsible for their reactions.”

“So how did he manage it?”

“He succumbed to king’s fever,” hoc said and seeing that Bruga did not understand he said, “Arrogance, it has no place in kingship.”

“Oh so it will happen anyway then?”

“Afraid so, you will then take over and carry on with the good work.”

“He has a son he will have first claim.”

“He is worthless you are a much better man for the job.”

“It does not work like that eldest son to eldest son, that’s how it’s always been.”

“Oh, I forgot about man’s foolish ways.”

“Not to worry,” the Earth Mother said, “I have given you the answer to the first secret. That will swing it for you for you are quite well liked anyway.”

“What is it?” Bruga said, “I don’t remember being given anything.”

“You will know when the time is right,” the Earth Mother said.

“Now our immediate concern,” hoc said, “It is written in the living book that you are to meet your brother tomorrow. It is written because it is a test.”

“A test,” Bruga said, “I did not know that you did that.”

“Occasionally, you are to get the better of him and a choice of life or death is called for.”

“Right and I let him go?”

“No on the contrary you will kill him.”

“Sorry, are you sure?”

“If you do not then it is written that within one week he will kill you and that could leave you quite a few problems.”

“Well I’d be dead,” Bruga said with a laugh, “That’s quite a problem for a start.”

“On the contrary the problems will start after you have died. That information that was given to you was to get you into kingship. If you are killed then the information was wasted and you would have to atone.”

“Atone, in what way?”

“By helping another king, as we have given you the answer to a question you will do the same for him.”

“That would sound alright I do not see a problem with that.”

“You might have to wait eternity for it to happen, that’s a lot of time to stand around, and laughed before saying, “Well at least you will be able to keep warm.”

“Sorry?”

“It seems there is a test with in a test. If you give Dryga fire you will spare your brother, if you don’t you will slay him and thus be king.”

“Well if he wants it he is welcome to it as far as I am concerned he has proved a good and generous friend and I will do all in my power to help him.”

“To help him to extinction for it is ordained he is not to have fire. That was the price of his immortality. He is destined to be a fire element. Give him fire then he loses that gift along with all his other abilities. You give him fire then you will have to take his place and return to the beginning of Man and wait your turn until Man is ready for you.”

“Oh, I guess I will not be giving him fire then.”

“Hopefully for when it goes out so does he.”

“Right don’t worry, I will not let something like that slip my mind.”

“You will not remember,” hoc said and then Bruga woke up. He went straight around to Dryga and said, “Well today is another day and quite a long one I would say.”

“Well you are early enough I will give you that,” Dryga said, “So first thing. We will go and see Tigon,” and then, “He is on his way.” Within a few minutes a large lizard made its way towards them. He was around 5metres long and stood as tall as Bruga’s waist. It studied Bruga hard and said silently to Dryga, “I thought he was dead I saw one of his kind that way.”

“Where was that?” Dryga said silently, “For they are his enemies.”

“Back yonder you’ll not find him for I have eaten him.”

“That is to be expected it does not do to let things go to waste.”

“My thoughts exactly, you are truly the wisest of them all.”

“Behind the tree yonder you will smell another, these are a strange people. When they die they put them below ground. How are they supposed to be scavenged?”

The people of the Kinti did not bury their dead as a rule, the reason Bruga buried Dito was only to hide him and get rid off any potential smell that would befoul Dryga’s dwelling.

“What’s this one like,” Tigon said, “I know very little about these animals.”

“He is a good man but I fear the rest of his kind are a barbaric, savage people.”

“I thought that when I saw the body it had a bad claw mark in its stomach. It was not the work of a passive animal.”

“I will vouch for this one but others after I will leave to your judgement.”

“I will bear that in mind, give him my welcome and then take him out the way. I’ve got a yearning for their flesh again.”

“The Great Mother will be pleased, another one of her children.”

“A dead one already I am well within the law. In fact I would say that I was doing her a favour, clearing up some mess for her. She should be pleased.”

“You’ll go far Tigon.”

“Just as far as that tree, give him my blessing then if it will send him on his way.”

“Tigon said that you look like a noble man and are welcome to join our community. He wishes you well and says that if there is anything you need just come and see him. He will do all that he can to help you and if he can’t help you he will hopefully know someone that will” Dryga said “I would say that you are safe for he has given you his blessing but I would not like to vouch for any that follow you for I had to warn him of your kin.”

“Thank you and thank him too. You mentioned my kin?”

“Yes it seems that he found one of them earlier. He was already dead.”

“Really, maybe it was my brother, could you ask him?”

“Sure,” Dryga said and then silently to Tigon, “One of his enemies is his brother, he was enquiring as to whether it was him.”

“He was dead before I could ask,” Tigon said.

“What was the colour of his hair? Was it the colour of snow or the colour of death?”

“The colour of death to match his mood.”

“It is not you brother,” Dryga said, “So he is the only one left.”

“Well I know where I stand now I suppose I had better look for him then.”

“No hurry I will show you around first. I’ll just tell Tigon that we are going,” and silently to Tigon, “All yours, help yourself.”

Bruga and Dryga headed off on their tour and Dito was dug up and eaten.

## Chapter 4

Dryga showed Bruga around the area and taught him of the flora. Plants to eat, plants to cure and plants to season and enhance the taste. It was a full morning by the time they had finished and were back at Bruga’s cave.

“So this is where you live,” Dryga said, “It looks comfortable but what is that?” and pointed to a pile of ashes, the remnants of a previous fire.

“Just ash from the fire,” Bruga said, “I should have cleared it up really.”

“Fire,” Dryga said for he had never seen it before, “What is fire?”

“You don’t know fire?” Bruga said, “Some abilities you have others I have I guess.” Dryga said.

A strong desire not to tell him came over Bruga but his strength of will overcame it so he said, “I don’t really know what to say about it. It gives us warmth and light at night. It blesses our meat to make it good to eat. It is a very good friend to man.”

”May I see it? For it sounds fascinating.”

“Sure,” Bruga said and quickly it was made. As Dryga watched the flames dart and sway he went to put his hand in it.



“No,” Bruga said quickly stopping him, “That will burn you.”

“Burn me?”

“Eat your hand it is an insatiable eater. When it stops eating it dies for it quickly starves.”

“Something we all do. I can feel its heat it is just like the Master of Fire as you call it.”

“Well we used to believe it was his children, that’s what the legends say.”

“I could well believe it myself for it seems a powerful animal,” they talked awhile longer, feeding the fire to make sure that it did not go out until Bruga said, “I suppose I had better find my brother then,” and got up.

“Do you want me to come with you? And maybe talk to him so he might see reason.”

“I fear he lost that power long ago. No, thank you for the offer but there are some things I have to do on my own.”

“I understand, at least let me find him for you,” and went quiet. After a short time he said, “He is not far,” and pointed past a clump of trees. “I will stay here and guard the fire for you if you like.”

“You are most welcome to stay and take warmth from it, don’t bother about feeding it though for it does not take long to make another one.”

“Fair enough,” Dryga said and signed his own death warrant.

Bruga left Dryga and walked off past the clump of trees. About a quarter of a mile later he came across Dega.

“So,” Dega said, “You have saved me the bother of looking for you,” and lifted his spear.

“I have not come here to fight you, I have come here to tell you to go back you have no quarrel with me. I don’t want to be king. I never have done for it’s a miserable job.”

“You’re just saying that,” Dega said as the elemental wheel turned, “You want to be king, everyone does.”

“I don’t. I think it is self seeking and ignoble. You are most welcome to it. I have found a better life and so am happy here.”

“What, here, it’s desolation,” Dega said and the wheel turned once more, “Mind you, you always liked desolation.”

“Why do you hate me? It means nothing to me now but I am just curious.”

“Because you are so humble, you make me sick. You are so humble I feel disgusting in your presence.”

“I can’t help the way I am and I am happy to be that way but why should that affect you?”

“You would make a better king than me and maybe that was your place.”

“I know nothing of kingship, nor do I want to but you can track better than I can, you can run faster than me. You can do a lot of things more suited to kingship than me. Why do you say I would be a better king?”

“Because you are humble you can consort with demons and I can’t.”

“What there are no such things.”

“Yes there are,” Dega said on the turning wheel (incidentally if we are the micro of a macro then the Earth’s relationship with the greater zodiac would be similar but on a much larger scale to man’s personnel relationship with the lesser zodiac, a small infinity perhaps. As above then so below I guess) “For they haunt me day and night.”

“They haunt you, what about?”

“What?”

“Well I don’t believe that they exist but if they did and were haunting you there must be

some reason for it, I mean, I'm not haunted."

"Yes but you are the true king, they must like you," then a moment past, "So why do they want me to kill you?"

"One moment," Bruga said interrupting his flash of reasoning, "What do you mean I am the true king?"

"Yes, that's right," Dega said as the wheel turned, "You were the first born not me. What do you think of that?"

"And that is why you hate me then because you envy me."

"Envy you don't make me laugh. I can run faster than you, I can throw a spear further than you, and I am stronger than you."

"But you are not the true king so all of that comes to nothing, I've told you anyway; I don't want to be king."

"Whether you want it or not it does not matter it is your rite and not mine. When I'm in your company how does it make me feel knowing that. And you know the worst thing about it is you're humble. You were made for the job not me. So now instead of helping me the demons are haunting me."

"I cannot help you but I would have thought that if they were haunting you for taking my job they would haunt you even more if you killed me."

"I don't know, that's what they have been telling me to do anyway," and tensed himself up as if to make a strike.

"I will not fight you not on your terms anyway. You better go back for I no longer live in your world."

"What? What did you say?"

"I no longer live in your world," Bruga repeated.

"World, do you know what a world is?"

"Yes it's all that's around us, the land the air, everything."

"And how did you come to know that?"

"I was told," Bruga said, he was about to say by Dryga but thought better of it for it would have exposed his existence.

"I guessed that, by who?"

"I cannot say just say I was told."

"A demon, you consorted with a demon, you must have done to know that."

"It was not a demon and why would it be for they do not exist."

"Shows how much you know for that is the answer to the first secret given to Man."

"Oh, you and those secrets you used to taunt me about it. They are not real."

"They are, I know them."

"You might know some things but as to going back to the beginning of time."

"It's true and you have opened the first one. That proves they are real."

"No," Bruga said with a laugh, "Tell me about it."

"That is hidden knowledge."

"Only until it is uncovered then it is safe to reveal."

"And I will be the first to reveal it," Segga said quietly to himself before saying, "The world is round."

"What don't be silly, if that's what you call a secret it is nonsense. The world is not round, it can't be. We have travelled long, long distances. If the world was round we would have surely found ourselves back where we started."

“It must mean that it’s flat and round like the Master of Fire.”

“Well maybe, not a lot of good us knowing it though, how is that going to benefit Man?”

“I don’t know. Who does, but times will change. The point is that you are the true king and you knowing that proves it. It is not safe for me while you live.”

“I don’t live in your world. I don’t want to live there. While I don’t live in your world there is no way I can do you harm.”

“But what’s stopping you coming back?”

“My hatred for it, I could never live in your world again. I will make a promise to you if that will appease you but I am telling you anyway, I have found a happier life here.”

“Time might change that,” Dega said and Bruga accepted that he would have to fight him. “So there is no reasoning with you,” he said and took his stance, “It had to be done I suppose,” and they started their combat. The battle raged for what seemed an eternity but eventually Dega fell and Bruga held the spear to his throat.

“Go on, kill me, you’ll be putting me out of my misery.”

“Am I going to have to or are you going to see sense at last.”

“I will leave you to your world I swear. One thing I will ask of you though for it might pacify the demons.”

“Go on.”

“Let me tell you those secrets then you will be king in your world. Maybe they will leave me alone then.”

“If you must,” Bruga said. With all he had learned from Dryga he did not think they would be worth much.

“The first one you already know, the second says that only a humble man can consort with a demon,” he related them one by one and things started to register in Bruga’s mind. Destined to live forever he thought about Dryga and this was enhanced when Dega said within him walks the Earth Mother.

“One moment,” Bruga said stopping him there, “What do these demons look like?”

“I don’t know I only hear them. I guess they would look like us but only different.”

“Different in what way?”

“I don’t know maybe a pointed chin, I’m not sure.”

“Wait here,” Bruga said, turned and ran back as fast as he could to the cave. He got back to find that the fire was out and Dryga along with it. He ran to the cave complex but with Dryga gone it was no longer there. It had all been illusionary and never existed. Slowly he made his way back to Dega. “These demons,” he said, “Do you think they exist?”

“I was right you have consorted with them. What do they look like, what have they told you? Tell me so through them I might live.”

Bruga described Dryga to him and told him all he had been told about Creation and magick and then thinking about Tigon and how unusual he was told Dega about him

“There you go,” Dega said, “That’s a monster. They are always associated with demons. Through them the demons do their work.”

“So what are they then?”

“I don’t know, that is just what I heard. But what you say about that Dryga sounds very much about what I have heard about demons. They do say that they live forever and he does seem to have close contact with the Earth Mother as well. Yes, if I was describing what I thought a demon was it would be him.”

“And I thought he was just a different sort of man, how foolish of me.”

“What? Do you think that there are other types of men? That is foolish. We are alone from the animals, there is only us.” (It had long been discredited that there were other forms of man on the land. Its final blow settled at the synod of the clans Spro and Gress when it finally lost any viability. They said that as man had now travelled the land and not found any they must not be there. Stories of their existence were discredited to super natural chicanery. So that SproGress.)

“No there must be more to it than that I mean if demons exist then anything is possible.”

“Yes but demons are tangible many people, well kings have seen them. That is where we get our information from the Earth Mother from.”

“No king has seen a demon but there have been other types of men seen.”

“Demonic trickery, you have seen it in action yourself. You thought that Dryga was another type of Man when he was just a normal demon.” (This had been the final nail in the coffin at the synod. It had been reasoned that demons turned into other types of men to play tricks on Man but also to try and destroy Man’s sense of self-worth by suggesting that he was not the only one up for the job of mastery of the Earth.)

“Maybe with me but not all the others can be put down to demonic chicanery. Why would they do it for a start?”

“I’m not sure but from what you have said about that story to try and put us ill at ease.”

“Sorry? How would anything he has told me put me ill at ease?”

“The story about the grandfather and the Earth Mother he mentioned 2 sons if I remember right.”

“Yes,” Bruga said still in the dark.

“Well as king I get privy to quite a lot of information in the higher thought stream. They say there was more than one Man vying for the job of Master of the Earth.”

“I can’t see that myself, that would mean there would be quite a few about and a lot of people would have seen them. No I do believe they exist but I think there are very few of them. Maybe they are the remnants of previous times, maybe at one time they were up for the job and lost it I would not like to say.”

“Well I don’t think they exist anyway, no it’s just a little trickery that’s all.”

“And I built my world around it. That was not a good thing to do.”

“It’s done,” Dega said and then another thought came to him, “So if they are playing then you can’t be the true king. They would not do it if you were for they wouldn’t dare.”

“I don’t want to be king I never have and I never will do. Why do you think that I do?”

“You know I believe you. I don’t think that you do.”

“I have told you many times, do you mean that it is finally sinking in.”

“And the voices have gone.”

“As has my world,” Bruga said sadly.

“You are most welcome to come back for now I know that you are not the true king and have no intentions of being one.”

“Well there is nothing here for me now but what sort of life have I in yours?”

“Any one you want for I do not see you as a threat to my power any more. You can even start seeing Daida if you like. I never wanted her anyway if I’m being honest it was just that I knew you liked her. But don’t worry you’ll see a different me now things will be a lot better for you.”

“Very well my world if finished here so I have no choice but yes I would like to come back.”

They both got up and started heading for home “So the world is round then,” Dega said thinking it in the linear, “Who would have thought it,” and being curious by nature, “So what do you think supports it?”

“What”

“Well it has to rest on something otherwise it will fall down the great abyss to the Netherworld,” and Man’s next search for enlightenment began.

“Who knows maybe something’s carrying it? Holding it up.”

“Yes, must be, you are a wise man. So what do you think would be able to carry such a weight then?”

“I don’t know but it must be big I would say that it was a giant animal of some sort. Maybe it’s not actually holding it with its hands because that would be too much like hard work. Maybe it’s resting on the animals back and its carrying it that way.”

“Yes I can see the logic in that so it would need four legs then for a man could not do it.”

“True, no, if it was round like a ball man could hold it but as it isn’t I would say that it is not a man,” (and that myth fell from grace for the time being.)

“So what was the best animal to do the job then? In your opinion I mean.”

“I wouldn’t really like to say, a turtle perhaps,” and the conversation continued. Bruga went back with his brother and before the week was out was dead so much for happy endings.

## 2. Dina's Story

With Bruga's quick demise and Dega's subsequent suicide some of the knowledge got lost but Man was able to go to another stage of the wheel. The climate still fluctuated keeping Man on his toes and the clans grew and fell in number time and again so the overall population did not really increase too much. They travelled out more and more sights of strange men occurred. It was still dismissed with abuse and scorn but the number of sightings meant it was only a matter of time before there was to be a close encounter of the third kind. The story I relate concerns twin brothers, not men, but like men, Dina and Dinu. I have called it Dina's story for Dinu was to get his own adventure at a later date. Now Dina was a forgetful kind of man even though the Nethals of which he belonged were noted for their mental agility, and would often have to go back for things. It was on one of these occasions the story begins. A bright summer's afternoon saw Dina going back to the quarry to fetch his stone hammer for he had found another use for it. His mood was not good for he had been there earlier on other business and had forgotten to pick it up. As he turned the final part he came face to face with another animal. Larger than him and carrying a flint spear he looked out of place in Dina's reality. This was enhanced by the fact that the figure looked strangely effeminate with his less pronounced brow and also he was almost hairless. It looked at Dina oddly, as if he was a freak of some kind; put his spear to Dina's throat and said, "What are you?" out loud. "I am a Nethal," Dina said, "This is my world. What are you doing in it?" "I can understand you and yet you don't talk," the figure said, "Why is that?" "This is how it has always been, why can't you?" "I've never tried," the figure said and tried but to no avail. "Never mind, where do you come from, are there many of you?" "Past the mountains I am alone though." "Have you travelled far?" "Many days two Moons full." "Are you lost?" "I wouldn't say that, are you a demon?" "No, why ever do you ask that?" "Well this is the Netherworld isn't it?" "No, why do you say that?" "Our folk lore says that the world is surrounded by mountains, this is to stop us falling off. It also says that those mountains I have crossed are the edge of the world." "So you think this must be the Netherworld then? No, I can quite assure you it's not. I am just surprised at seeing you here as you are at seeing me, I can tell you." "What really, so what did you say you were called? Nethal?" "No I am Dina a Nethal is what I am. What are you called?" "I am Petan I am a man. We are the Masters of the World." "Well your world maybe but this is our world and in it there are no masters. It was ordained by the Earth Mother." "That's not what the Bringer of Fire said," Petan said as a theological debate was in the brewing "He said that man was to have mastery of the world." "Your world maybe but what did the Earth Mother say about that for she says that we are all her children." "Maybe we are the eldest though so it is our rite."

“How old are you? How many cycles have you been through?”  
“It is 38 cycles since I ignited I am considered an elder.”  
“38 cycles that is not an elder. Our elders have lived more than 70 cycles.”  
“70 cycles that cannot be. No one lives that long.”  
“It is true I have no reason to lie to you. Anyway where are my manners? You have travelled far and must be pretty hungry.”  
“It is only 2 days since I last ate. I could go for longer but it would be rude of me to decline your offer. Besides now I am here I would like to know all about this world.”  
“Then follow me and I will take you home and you too can tell me of your world.”  
As they headed back they did not know that they were being watched.  
“First contact,” the Earth Mother said, “And it did not go too badly.”  
“Well that man could do with humility,” hoc said, “You should have sent a king.”  
“He has potential. As have all my children.”  
“But with something like this I thought it would be too important to leave to chance.”  
“It has to be I’m afraid I cannot interfere.”  
“Well not being funny but I would say that if it wasn’t for your interference man would have fallen long ago.”  
“After this union they should be a lot less arrogant that is why we are having it.”  
“I bow down to your view of the bigger picture but I can’t see their relationship lasting. I fear that Man would just end up killing them.”  
“That’s why we are doing this to give them a few glances of each other, should lessen the shock I think.”  
“You should have sent a king though. When he goes back with the story of what he’s seen no one will believe him. He’s not credible.”  
“Another chance we have to take,” the Earth Mother said and the conversation ended.  
As Dina and Petan walked back Dina said, “Are there many men in your world?”  
“There are fifty in our group but there are many groups such as ours, some a lot bigger in number.”  
“And why did you actually come here were you trying to get to the end of the world?”  
“I know it sounds daft, well the rest of the group though it was, but I had to try. I wanted to see what it looked like.”  
“No, it shows courage in fact. None of us would ever dream of doing something like that. You will cause quite a stir when we get back I can tell you.”  
“Will it be safe? I mean they might react badly.”  
“I doubt it very much; in fact I would say you would be quite the hero. They will be interested to say the least. We are not an aggressive race anyway. Tell me something though, judging by your last sentence what are your chances of saying the same?”  
“You know I don’t really know. I would say that some would act badly. Mostly I would say they’d be intrigued though.”  
“Any way we are here now,” Dina said and they entered into a camp of basic shelters. Soon they were surrounded by Nethals who had come to look at the strange figure that Petan was to them.  
“What is that?” Dinu said “Where did you find it?”  
“Out at the quarry,” Dina said, “He said he is a Man.”  
“Where did he come from? Is there more of them?”  
“Other side of the mountains, he says there are quite a few.”

“What sort of animal is it? It looks like it could be dangerous.”

“I think so, the first thing he did was to put a spear to my throat but I think that was because he thought I was a demon.”

“I don’t like the sound of this, it sound like we have found a raging lion. I will entertain him for he will think I am you and you go and see what the Earth Mother has to say about this.”

“I want to have a word with her anyway; you know he said that they were the Masters of the World.”

“What? And he has a full race behind him; this could spell big trouble and no mistake.”

“She will know what to do,” Dina said and sneaked away to be alone with his thoughts.

“Great Mistress, sustainer of life, what manner of animal do you send into our care and what does he mean when he says that he is to be Master of the World?”

“He is a Man Dina,” the Earth Mother said, “You are to merge and become one before he can move to his next step.”

“Merge,” Dina said, “If he looks like that I would hate to see what his mates look like.”

“Ah, that will not really concern you.”

“What?”

“I’m afraid that I have bad news for you, their arrival coincides with a forthcoming Sun cycle. They have brought sterility with them. Your males will not be able to mate and without their males you would just die out. Your females will mate and through that you will emerge a stronger strain.”

“So you are killing us off so that they get stronger, have we not served you well, have we wronged you somehow?”

“Killing you off, what mother kills her child. You are to become timeless, that is your reward.”

“You mean that we will never die, are you taking away the stigma?”

“You can be killed, you just won’t get old that’s all.”

“I apologise, I should never have doubted that your intentions are always good. But please tell me something if you don’t mind.”

“Nothing is with holden from you, ask and it will be revealed.”

“Why them? They seem so arrogant if that specimen is anything to go by.”

“It won’t be them but neither will it be you, it will be a mixture of both of you. It is a mergence of their knowledge, wisdom and yours, understanding. You have a line to me and they have a line to the Bringer of Light, between the two you will be capable of running the land. They haven’t got my art for since they got arrogant they lost their common sense of purpose. They have no common sense. Now the reason it’s your females is they need to be injected with the feminine understanding to balance the masculine power.”

“Oh yes I can see that. It appears I have been concerned unduly.”

“Treat him well, his impression of you will be the impression he gives to the rest of his kind.”

“I’ll bare that in mind.”

“Come and see me tonight I have someone to introduce you to,” the Earth Mother said and the conversation ended. Dina went back to the man who was regaining the crowd with stories of his hunting prowess and listened in. “So any way where was I?” Petan said, “Yes, that’s right. So I was walking with just my spear and bow and arrow and this



great bear appeared before me. He stood up on his hind legs and was nearly twice my size. Scared, now most people would be under the circumstances but not me. I took my stance and got ready to overcome it.”

“Why didn’t you ask it what it wanted?” Dina said.

“What, can you talk to animals then?”

“Well we don’t know what a bear is but if it’s an animal we share the same language.”

“Serious, I don’t believe you.”

“Are you questioning my brother’s integrity?” Dinu said.

“He is not of our world,” Dina said, “Things are different in their world probably.”

“You can then,” Petan said, “So how do you do it if you don’t mind me asking.”

“The same way we talk to you,” Dina said.

“Really, you must teach me.”

“We have always had it, it has never been taught to us.”

“Amazing, what else can you do then?”

“Sorry?”

“Any more fancy tricks you know like talking to the animals and that.”

“We have always talked to the animals so it is not a fancy trick to us. I would have to know what you consider a fancy trick.”

“Yes I see.”

“Time will answer that one but now I bet you must be tired. Allow me to show you where you can sleep,” and took him to one of the shelters where he soon fell to sleep. After Dina left him he went straight to Dinu and said, “The Earth Mother would appreciate it if we look after him well and tell him of our ways. We are to leave him with a good impression of us.”

“Alright,” Dinu said, “Well if my patience can stand it. I have never heard such a boring self obsessed animal in my life.”

“Well they do go hand in hand I am afraid.”

“Is he to be Master of the World then?” Dinu said wondering about the special treatment.

“Well in a way,” Dina said and went on to tell him what he had been told. After he had finished Dinu said, “Sounds like quite a big event, I would say that it’s a shame we cannot be part of it but I am happy with the alternative.”

“My thoughts exactly so show him around, give him a good time and send him quickly on his way before we die of boredom.”

“My thoughts exactly,” Dinu said and they parted for sleep.

Dina’s visit to the Netherworld saw him meeting the Earth Mother who had an introduction to make. “Dina, this is hoc, he is helping me at this stage of development.”

“Please to meet you,” Dina said wondering what it was all about.

“He is to tell you about man and his ways,” the Earth Mother said enlightening him,

“You might find it helpful when dealing with Petan.”

“Fair enough,” Dina said and hoc began, “Well I guess you know by now that he is arrogant.”

“Hoc,” the Earth Mother said, “I don’t want you to poison him.”

“If they are all like him then I have already worked that out,” Dina said with a laugh. (Well as close to a laugh as he could get)

“They got that way because of their old legends,” hoc said, “So it might be a good idea to tell you what they are at present.”

“At present, do you mean that they change?”

“Every few hundred cycles or so.”

“That often, why is that then?”

“Natural catastrophes, wars, you know the type of thing, old orders fall and new ones take over, you know how it is.”

“Not really.”

“Well anyway the first age was a golden age where they themselves could talk with the animals, not like you do though but loud for all animals could talk.”

“Our legends say the same, well except Man is not mentioned in it.”

“No, that’s not their legends,” hoc said with a laugh, “Incidentally he is mentioned in your legends but I will get back to that later. No, their legends state that the Bringer of Light gave them mastery of the world because of the humility of one man. This legend held sway for most of that age though evolved slightly over time. The good lady herself was known by Man then though they took more notice of their father. That was the seedling. The second age is the age we’re in now, growth. The Bringer of Light has mutated through the Master of Fire, the Fire Master, the Great Spark in the Sky and is now the Great Bringer of Fire. Neither the Earth Mother’s name nor role has changed but their Creation story has. Now a man called Kenna was the receiver of the gift and instead of getting it through humility he got it for defeating a great animal, his rival for the claim, a bear.”

“Bear?” Dina said in surprise.

“Oh, and they are liars.”

“Hoc,” the Earth mother said, “What have I told you?”

“I apologise,” hoc said and looking at Dina, “Sorry. That’s his beliefs any way. He is quick tempered and at times treacherous. He has a thing called self-consciousness that might be alien to you.”

“Yes,” Dina said, “I don’t think I have come across that before. Is it an animal like the bear?”

“Well in a way it is the bear,” hoc said, “You see self consciousness is a state of mind. It is one that puts the good of the individual before that of the whole now to do that you have to perceive yourself as special, different from the rest, better. He did not always have this self consciousness for his early legends state that the man, Phin, did not get it because he was a man. He got it because he was humble. Humility is selfishness so self consciousness does not exist. A humble man does not live for himself he lives for the good of others. You Dina are a humble man. Because of that you retain contact with the Earth Mother and can talk to the animals. Man could once but lost it when Phin lost his humility.”

“I understand that but where does the bear fit it?”

“It is the only predator of note now. If man ever took him on without weaponry he would not stand a chance. Man envied the bear for its strength and so had to destroy it in his mind on one level but also by destroying it, it enhanced his pride for in the story that was the reason he got mastery in the first place. Pride and envy are the motivational forces behind self consciousness. Their stories say that only a king can consort with a demon.”

“A king?”

“A humble man well except it’s changed its meaning but that is what it was. That should keep you busy for a while.”

“And the legend?”

## Chapter 2

“First tell me the legend,” hoc said, “So I might know your understanding.”

Dina thought awhile and said, “In the beginning of things the Earth Mother moulded the Earth and cried with pleasure on seeing her work. Her tears fell on her work and water sprang up everywhere. On seeing her tears Father Sun sent her his love and from that union Taga was born. Now Taga was lonely so she asked the Earth Mother if she could send her a friend so a mate was formed and presented to her so he might serve her. Min was his name but he was not up to his purpose because he thought that as he was made bigger than her she should serve him. Instead of being her friend he beat her and hurt her and leaving her pregnant he left her to die. The Earth Mother found her but she died in her arms so fearing for the child’s safety she brought her back to life by entering into her and from this union Nethal was born.”

“Good.”

“Do you mean to tell me that he was Min?”

“That’s right except they call him Phin.”

“But the legends also say that the Earth Mother drove him mad as a punishment is this man safe?”

“It was only a story,” the Earth Mother said, “It had a hidden meaning.”

“It’s beyond me then.”

“Well,” the Earth Mother said, “This is not the first time we have tried to mate him.”

“What, you mean that our women might be beaten?”

“Just the story again,” hoc said, “No the reality was that they did not get on. Some did though and from that came Nethal, over time you became pure again.”

“You said that they did not get on so what actually happened then?”

“Mass killings,” hoc said, “It took a long time to get up to number again I can tell you. They even managed to kill the totem.”

“And do you think we will be safe when they get here? I mean not being funny if it happened once it means there’s a precedence and what’s a totem anyway?”

“They are not like that now. Time and the injection of Themo blood that happened at the time has calmed them down.”

“And a totem?”

“It is a symbol of your race; well an element of it for your race has two symbols, Earth and Water. From these symbols you were created.”

“Right.”

“Dryga was Fire and Dryda Air and this brings us to you and Dinu.”

“Me and Dinu.” Dina said in surprise.

“You are water and Dinu is Earth from you all this came to be.”

“Us, how can that be?”

“It has just been erased from your memory that’s all; we are here to refresh your knowledge so it will come back.”

“Oh to what purpose?”

“You are to help the Earth Mother with her work; you are to help Man evolve.”

“I see, you place a lot of concern on Man, why is that?”

“He is needed to tend the Earth, well when he is ready for it that is for if he wasn’t then I

am afraid he would destroy it.”

“All this how?”

“He is a will full animal without purpose this will make him destructive. With purpose he becomes creative and the Earth Mother can live in him once more and through her knowledge the world becomes a special place. You see Dina, to put it bluntly it is all about knowledge and he is the only one that can utilise it and create things from it. Without him the knowledge is no good because it can’t be used.”

“And this knowledge, where does it come from, the Earth Mother?”

“Some but most from the stars that surround us. It is a constant stream.”

“And he just utilizes it.”

“Through elemental help that’s where you and Dinu come in.”

“That is a noble task you give me but I fear that I might not be up to it as I have a terrible memory. What if I forget to tell him something important? This is a heavy responsibility that you give me.”

“You will do well,” the Earth Mother said, “But don’t worry about forgetting things as we’ll make sure of anything you miss.”

“Well fair enough then,” Dina said picking up, “I wouldn’t like to think I would miss anything and let you down.”

“You’ll do just right,” the Earth Mother said, “It is time to wake now. Tell Petan of your ways and land and soon he will be ready to go back.”

“My lady,” Dina said and woke up.

Dina quickly found Petan and said, “The Earth Mother wants me to show you of our ways.”

“You can consort with demons?” Petan said in shock.

“Another one of my fancy tricks.”

“No, I mean you can actually consort with demons. I never thought that was possible. They used to say that our kings could but I thought it was just an old myth.”

“Well she told me they could so they must have been able to.”

“I never knew.”

“Well you used to it was just that you forgot.”

“No, I’m sure I would have remembered.”

“Ah,” Dina said finally working out what self consciousness was, “When I talk I talk of a race. We do not exist as individuals. You’ll have to excuse me for that error.”

“So Man, well kings could consort with demons then.”

“Surely the fact that you can consort with demons makes you a king, any man can do it.”

“What,” Petan said in surprise, “We have always believed that kingship went on bloodline.”

“No humility. If you are humble you can consort with a demon and so are called king. You have a oneness with the Earth Mother and this blesses the land for she is all bountiful. Not only that though through the elements what you call demons, she gives you her wisdom and creative power to innovate new ways of making life better.”

“You know this much,” Petan said starting to look at things in a new light.

“You have the knowledge of an individual,” Dina said enlightening him even more, “And I have the knowledge of a race.”

“That’s amazing so all these things I have set my standards by are false.”

“Misguided perhaps I would have to hear them before I could really make a comment.”

“We look to our kings to lead the people.”

“I thought that was the elders’ job, we are all kings after all.”

“I am not dreaming this am I? Did I die in the mountains and come to Cafan?”

“Cafan?”

“It is where our kings go when they die, no; it can’t be for I am not a king. Yes, but you said that any humble man was a king. Oh my head, am I dead?”

“No,” Dina said laughing, “But tell me about Cafan, what is it supposed to be like?”

“It is not dissimilar, like here; it is warmer than where we live. Strange animals abound. Creatures, monsters with necks larger than their bodies but peaceful for you can talk to them.”

“Well it sounds like here for that sounds very much like Olef to me but I can quite assure you that you are not dead.”

“And you are a king then, a real life one. I have heard you can cast spells and force circumstances your way.”

“I can make potions to heal but I have no want to cast spells nor do I want to change my destiny, no true king would.”

“Yes, humility that’s when you put the good of the clan before the good of yourself. Could you teach me how to get it or is it something you have to be born with too?”

“I will have to get back to you on that one I’m afraid for I have known nothing else to compare it with but I’m guessing that as Man used to have it, it might just be a case of reawakening. Anyway I have someone I wish you to meet,” and took him to see Olef. As they approached Petan said, “It is true, I did not think it possible. See how his head almost touches the sky. Truly this is Cafan.”

“Who is that strange creature,” Olef said to Dina, “And what is that noise he is making?”

“He is a man that has come from across the mountains and that noise is him speaking.”

“He is a strange looking thing what does he say for I cannot understand him.”

“He says that your head almost touches the sky.”

“Is he a bit simple?”

“I won’t make any judgement, his name is Petan. Is there anything you would like to know from him?”

“I shouldn’t think so I don’t think he’d be up to knowing anything worthwhile.”

“Well,” Dina said to Petan, “Are there any other monsters you have in Cafan?”

“Yes, cat-master.”

“Cat-master, what does he look like?”

“It is a great cat and from it all cats were born, fire sparks from around his head and falls to Earth to ignite as cats.” (the Kenna people believed in an afterlife world which enclosed both a ‘heaven’ and a ‘hell’. The cat master was a Satan like figure and the cats his demons. At this time cats were larger and though no real threat to man more aggressive than domesticated ones. Although they had previously lived with man with all the upheaval they had taken back to the wilderness and shunned man once more becoming nocturnal to hunt to keep out of his way. Their howls and that of their victims gave rise to the theory that they were demons, the bad ones that come out at night, not the ones that consorted with kings)

-“Well there is a cat here but I don’t think he would fit the description. I will call him though as he might be able to help you,” and the lion was called for. It duly arrived and Petan went into a panic. Now to actually put a gauge on the panic it would be like you

meeting up with Satan himself.

“Is he alright,” the lion said, “Why does he shake so. Has he the fever?”

“No great Leo,” Dina said, “He thinks that you are some sort of monster.”

“What?” Leo said angrily, “I’ll rip his head off. Who does he think he is to insult me?”

“He means no harm, his legends talk of a fire monster and you seem to fit the picture. You must not mind him for he is a stranger to our world and to him we are demons and monsters.”

“A bit simple is he,” Leo said understanding, “Mind you he looks it. So I am mentioned in their legends then. Well I never, I wonder how that came to be?”

“Who knows, maybe some have made the journey before and came back with the tale.”

“Maybe.”

“No,” Dina said, “Thinking more about it they see it as an afterlife so they would have to perceive themselves as coming back from the dead.”

“True, well unless they thought they were dead?”

“Funny you should say that, now is there anything you would like to ask it while you are here?”

“No I fear it would be in vain. He looks like a gibbering idiot, “and turned and left.

“That was it,” Petan said, “That was the cat master.”

“That is Leo,” Dina said, “He is just an animal the same as you and I was there any others?”

“Many but I fear they are just creatures of this world.”

“I will show you anything that you want to see nothing is too much trouble. I can call any animal to us as long as I know what it is from your description.”

“No, no thank you,” Petan said and thought a moment, “Well the animals I sort of understand. The cat master, that’s just another animal but what about the Fire Masters pot?”

“Sorry?”

“Where he makes Man.”

“I’m not sure,” Dina said, “What does it look like?” and Petan described a volcano to him. Dina took him to one and they climbed to the top and looked into the lava below.

“Yes, this is it,” Petan said, “You must be able to see him sometimes when he’s at his work.”

“Who?”

“Why the Master of course,” Petan said and looking deep into it, “I wonder how many sparks are just lying in wait to come back to life again.”

“He does not come here that is just a fire mountain, have you not got any in your world?”

“No, well I’ve never seen one anyway.”

“Well they are pretty rare. Right is there anything else I can show you?”

“Not really I can see that it is just another world now.”

“Well what about our ways then? Is there anything you would like to know concerning them?”

“Yes, you don’t see kings in the same way as us, what actually leads you?”

“Common sense and our elders, first tell me how your way works and then I will have something to compare ours to.”

“Well we have kings, these are our leaders but we also have elders. These make our laws and judge for the king. We have hunters for our meat and women to do our gathering and

our children kill the rats.”

“Right, well we are all kings but we are guided by our elders and their wisdom.”

“Is that it, how do you manage like that?”

“It is how we have always done, it just runs itself and all is as it should be.”

“What about power struggles?”

“What are they?”

“You know. When someone else wants to be the king.”

“We are all kings; we all get our power from the Earth Mother. Where is the struggle in that?”

“But someone has to be master it was ordained by the Fire Master.”

“Power, is that what you call mastery?”

“No, mastery gives you the power.”

“We must be talking about different things. What is this power of which you speak?”

“The power to give orders the ultimate power of life and death.”

“What,” Dina said in surprise, “The power of life and death, not even the Earth Mother herself has that power. What good is power like that?”

“Well it doesn’t happen often,” Petan said trying to justify it, “It’s more to do with what the power gives you.”

“Yes?” Dina said confused.

“You get the best meat, the most attractive mate. You have a lot better lifestyle as a king, I can tell you.”

“Oh, self seeking power.”

“There is no other.”

“There is a far greater power than that. The power I talk about comes from the Earth Mother. She tells me where the best food is and gives me all I need. What power could be greater than that?”

“Nothing, not in comparison. Teach me humility so I too may have the power.”

“You already know it. I will see the Earth Mother and ask her advice for you.”

“You are a good man.”

“Anyway let’s head for home. I’m sure you must be hungry.”

“Well it was quite a climb,” Petan said and looking into the crater once more, “I wonder what’s it for?”

“The Earth Mother told us it was there to keep the air pure,” Dina said and they started to make their way back down the volcano again. At the bottom they came across a zebra who was waiting for them.

“Dina,” it said, “Is this the animal who thinks he is Master of the World?”

“He’s starting to see things a little more clearly now Ota,” Dina said, “He is not wise to our world so you must forgive him.”

“Doesn’t look much does he? They reckon he’s a bit simple. Are they all like that?”

“I haven’t a clue, anyway he’s not simple. It’s more that he’s been misguided that’s all.”

“Well anyway as long as he doesn’t try to give me orders that’s all. I’ll quick put him on his back. Who does he think he is the Earth Mother?”

“Now Ota she never gives orders.”

“I never said she did I’m just saying, and looking at him confirms it, he is not special.”

“I think he’s learning that already anyway even if he did you would not understand him.”

“You’re the wise one,” Ota said and left.

### Chapter 3

After he had gone Petan said, "We used to call that a unicorn."

"And what do your legends say about it?"

"It is a being of both worlds white for our world, the world of light and black for the Netherworld, the world of darkness. It brings messages between the worlds and is a friendly creature."

"Well it's not all bad then," Dina said seeing the irony.

"We have animals similar but they don't have their markings. The legends said that if you can jump on its back it would take you back to the Netherworld but no one has ever managed to find out if it's true."

"I wouldn't want to try that with Ota he would not like that at all."

"I was thinking that myself, he wasn't looking too kindly at me, I could tell."

"Don't mind him it's just that your Master of the World belief does not make you too popular around here."

"Well I think that fell from grace when I saw the cat master. Kenna might have killed a bear unarmed but that looks like it would just rip him apart."

"He is overpowering isn't he. He's a good animal though. He's not ignoble."

"I don't think they'll believe any of this when I go back, they'll say I've lost my mind."

"Are you thinking of returning then? You have only just got here."

"Well I've seen enough I think. I was wondering if I could come back occasionally. This seems so much better than my world. Don't worry, thinking about it I won't tell anyone else."

"It's a free world you are always welcome. But you must not keep it a secret as there are no secrets here."

"Very well and humility, you will ask the Earth Mother?"

"Tonight."

"And then if I need to may I stay a little longer?"

"As long as you like you are always welcome."

Dina travelled to the Netherworld and saw the Earth Mother and hoc once more.

"Very good," the Earth Mother said, "You have done all that was asked of you."

"He wants to know how to get humility; he asked me if I would ask you about it."

"Tell him he already has it," the Earth Mother said, "You have given it to him."

"Me, how?"

"You destroyed all the perceptions that once made him proud," the Earth Mother said,

"When they went all that was left was humility (nothingness) just by being with you he learned how to get better."

"Oh, so I did alright then."

"You did very well," the Earth Mother said, "You did all that was asked of you and more.

There is one last thing though."

"Anything."

"He is to start from home tomorrow," the Earth Mother said, "I want you to follow him for he is destined to have a fall. This will put him to sleep for a while so when he wakes up there will be a good chance that he will think that this place was the afterlife."

"Yes."

"So I want you to make yourself re-known to him," the Earth Mother said, "So he will realise that the place was real."



“My lady, it will be done.”

”Now I will leave you and hoc to talk awhile,” the Earth Mother said and disappeared.

“Well Dina,” hoc said, “You have served your purpose well and are ready to move on to the next stage.”

“The next stage?”

“You are to become a demon and help man evolve.”

“You mean that I am destined to die? For that would be the only way that could happen.”

“It is written, I did not bring it up in front of the Earth Mother not wanting to upset her but I thought I had better warn you to give you time to say your goodbyes.”

“Thank you for that, so what’s going to happen to me?”

“You will come to an end before you had a chance to perform your last task but now Petan is humble you may live in him awhile and guide him that way.”

“Well I’ll get to see his world if nothing else,” Dina said resigned to his purpose, “And how am I to die, by the hand of man?”

“No, the claw of an animal,” hoc said and disappeared.

Dina woke up and remembering the dream went straight around to Dinu to tell him all the details. After he had finished Dinu said, “I will miss you but I guess it’s for the best.”

“You too I just hope that I am worthy of the privilege.”

“You’ll do fine.”

“It’s my memory though I don’t want to let them down with it.”

“You’ll be alright,” Dinu said and they parted for the last time.

Petan approached not long after and said, “So the Earth Mother, what did she have to say about it?”

“She said that you already have it.”

“You mean that I can now consort with demons.”

“While you have humility that is all it takes.”

“But I have it though haven’t I?”

“At the moment but you can quickly lose it so you must take care.”

“I can lose it, how?”

“By being self conscious again.”

“Thanks, I will try to remember it. You have been good to me and I thank you for it. You showed me respect when really you are the masters, you are far superior to us I will never forget you,” and said his goodbyes and left. Dina gave him time to get ahead and then started to follow him. Three days he tracked him without seeing another animal and then he came across a bear.

“What sort of animal are you?” he asked out of curiosity.

“I can understand you,” the bear said, “How is that possible?”

“I am Dina, a Nethal; we can do that sort of thing.”

“Oh you are not a Man then. Mind you looking at you more closely I can see the differences. Are you like Man in action as well as in looks?”

“I would not be able to talk to you if I was. No, I am completely different. So what do they call you then?”

“My name is Brutus I am a bear.”

“A bear I have heard of you.”

“Have you, that is indeed an honour. So tell me what you have heard for I cannot see why I should be famous.”

“They say that you are the top predator around here the strongest one there is.”

“Well I don’t know about that they say that Man is a good hunter. So where do you come from then. I have not seen your kind?”

“Over the other side of the mountains about three days walk for me.”

“I have never been that far. I have heard that the world ends there.”

“Yes but then a new world begins. That is where I live.”

“And this world it must not have predators like me then.”

“It has predators but none like you.”

“Are they as strong as me?”

“I wouldn’t like to say I have not seen your strength so I cannot judge.”

“Well I could carry you on my back can any of the other animals in your world do that?”

“One or two.”

“And running? What about running at top speed carrying you?”

“Probably not, you would be the strongest one there then.”

“Then let me prove it to you so that I might know I am the strongest of both worlds I will carry you on my back and not only that run at full speed, I will run up that steep bank and reach the top.”

“It is not necessary for looking at you I can well believe it.”

“I insist I have to prove it to myself.”

“Why is that then? I mean looking at your size I would say that you had nothing to prove.”

“So why does Man get all the glory? I mean I know that you are right and I am far stronger but he gets all the honours. The Earth Mother tells me that, that is how it is meant to be but when I see him I just think she is wasting her time with him.”

“But carrying me up that embankment, what would that really prove.”

“Well you are the same size, roughly, as Man. If I carry you that means I am stronger than you but if I can carry you and make that slope it means that I can carry you as if you were no weight at all. I need some self worth.”

“Yes, I sort of see what you mean, fair enough,” and got on the bears back. The bear raced as fast as he could up the slope and nearly got to the top but lost his footing. He tumbled down head over heels taking Dina with him and nearly crushing him to death. The coup de grace was when the bear’s claws accidentally ripped out Dina’s throat in the final somersault. As Dina’s shell lay motionless Dina left and went to see the Earth Mother.

“You have done well.”

“But I died before I could do what you have asked of me how can I have done well?”

“Ah,” hoc said, “It was meant to be that way. Your real job is to guide Petan.”

“And that is what you are here for,” the Earth Mother said, “Petan is heading for his fall.”

“So you knew then.”

“Sometimes all is not what it seems,” hoc said with a smile, “Take me for an example. In my last transformation I was the Masters of Wisdom and I did everything I could to stop Man evolve. I am a friend now but before that I was an enemy.”

“Remember that well,” the Earth Mother said, “Be very careful in you work. Any way I will take you and hoc to the Creative Cauldron,” and the scene changed. Dina found himself before a great cauldron.

“Now Dina,” the Earth Mother said, “Before you can enter I will need to take away some

of hoc's power."

"Thanks," hoc said, "You never told me this."

"I have to I'm afraid," the Earth Mother said, "Don't worry for you will remain intact, it is just your power I am after." She took the words 'insight of' and put them in the pot.

"Soon be ready," She said and from where they were they watched Petan heading for home. He was on his own for the mountains were truly a desolate place and he was making his way up a steep pass when he lost his footing to shale. He fell forward and hitting his head was knocked unconscious.

"He's ready," the Earth Mother said and from the letters in the pot took out 'go in' and Dina entered into his psyche and occupied the vacant space where Petan's arrogance used to be.

Petan woke up with a nasty head-ache. He looked around and cursed his stupidity. His thought chain then wondered how long he had been out and finally had he been to Cafan. It was then that Dina made his presence felt

"It is not Cafan, it is another world."

"What, what is this? Who are you and what are you doing in my head?"

"You are now humble. You can consort with a demon. You are a true king. It is I, Dina."

"Then I was in Cafan for to do this you must be dead."

"I am now but I wasn't the last time that we spoke. I met with one of your bear friends."

"And he killed you?" Petan said and looking around, "He's not around here is he?"

"A couple of days back, he did not kill me on purpose though it was just an accident."

"And you're a demon now. So what's it like in the afterlife?"

"I er. only just got there and then they sent me straight to you. So anyway that bear was truly strong you must be quite powerful to overcome it. I bow down to your strength."

"Er." Petan said sheepishly, "I just made it up. I would have no chance against a bear."

"Sorry? You made it up. Why would you do something like that?"

"I don't know I guess I wanted to impress you that's all."

"To what purpose?"

"So you would treat me with respect I guess. You'll think that I am a man of action and so not want to trifle with me."

"It's not like that in our world you get respected for your wisdom. Any way that is not respect it's fear nothing more. Is that how it has come to be in your world?"

"I'm afraid so, it's all to do with courage. You show them that you are not scared and they will rarely tangle with you for fear of losing face."

"Losing face?"

"Making themselves look foolish and destroying their image. It is a very big thing in our world I can tell you."

"It sounds a very violent place."

"It's not that bad as certain guide lines have been drawn, it has been heavily ritualised because we came to realise that if we carried on we would just end up killing each other."

"This should be quite an eye opener for me I have never heard anything like it. This is a different kind of power to your version of kingship isn't it?"

"Yes, I suppose it's more glory. A good warriors name can live forever for he is kept alive through the stories about him. Kings rarely rate a mention nowadays but I have heard that, that was not always the case. I guess knowing that your name will live on makes you more aware of your actions as they might end up as stories."

“Well I can see the logic I suppose. So it’s all about how you want to be known and remembered by.”

“Don’t you have stories yourself?”

“We have stories, though not like yours I’ll bet. Ours are more about how we came to be and the purpose behind things.”

“Not being funny but they don’t sound very interesting our warriors will not be interested.”

“There is nothing to satisfy their blood lust that’s all. No ours is about wisdom and how things came to be.”

“May I hear one and then I will tell you one of mine so we can compare the two.”

“Well we have plenty of time I suppose. I am guessing we are still a long way from home. You said that it took you two Moons to cross it if I remember rightly.”

“Ah, I might have overestimated a little; it was only a half Moon.”

“Well that’s still plenty of time; you will tell me the truth from now on though won’t you?” Petan’s silence was answer in itself.

“Good,” Dina said, “So you want a story then. What about this one? Nethal looked upon the river bird as it made its home for the first time. He marvelled at its skill and asked it to show him how it was done. The river bird gladly showed him for it was pleased with its work and from that we got new dwellings.”

“Oh,” Petan said after he had finished, “That was quick.”

“It served its purpose. It showed us how we got our dwellings.”

“Yes, but not being funny it was a bit boring.”

“Boring, I would not say that. Our stories are to preserve our knowledge so should it ever be forgotten we can look to nature for our answers.”

“Well that’s one way of looking at it, I suppose. Ours are more to pass the long winter nights and keep our spirits high.”

“Knowledge easily gets lost that way. Stories last as long as people are there to tell them. They alone survive natural disasters and regenerate the old skills to start again.”

“Oh, I never thought it in that way before. It makes me feel a little ashamed about my one now.”

“Tell it anyway so I might get a better understanding of your people.”

“Fair enough, I will tell you the story of Kenna and the bear. Once Kenna was out on a hunt when he chanced upon a bear, the bear could talk then so he said to it, “The Master of Fire tells me that I have to fight you.”

The bear seeing that Kenna had his spear and bow and arrows was scared, it said, “What match am I to you with your stick of death and air borne stings.”

“Then I will cast them aside,” Kenna said, “That will make us the same,” and threw his weapons to the ground. On seeing this the bear lost his fear and said, “So we are to fight then. Good. What are we fighting for?”

“For mastery of the world,” Kenna said, “The winner is to be recognised as master by the other,” and the bear agreed. They fought and fought both evenly matched for a day and a night until the bear fell dead of exhaustion. That is how Man became Masters of the World.”

“Right,” Dina said, “I would have told the bear that if I had known it earlier. I’m sure he would have liked it.”

“It was just a story,” Petan said sheepishly and they walked on their way.

## Chapter 4

Time past by and soon Dina was entering the world of man. He was horrified at the difference, constant tension and aggression that could surface at any time; it was a lot different to his world. As Petan was about a quarter of a mile from home he chanced upon his cousin Dahy

“So the wanderer has returned,” Dahy said, “How was the end of the world,” and laughed “It wasn’t,” Petan said his temper creeping in and leaving Dina no place to manoeuvre, “It was the start of another that’s all.”

“What,” Dahy said, “What do you mean the start of another?”

“Another world like ours only different, there were different animals and different men although they called themselves Nethals.”

“Nethal,” Dahy said looking at Petan strangely, “And these animals, what did they look like?”

“There was the cat master, only he was just a normal animal, I saw a unicorn and a skyscraper.”

“You have been to the Netherworld.”

“No it was just a normal world.”

“Nethals from the Netherworld you must have died and came back again.”

“No it was real.”

“What’s that mark on your head?” Dahy said and pointed to the damage Petan got from his fall.

“I slipped back in the mountains it is nothing.”

“And did it put you to sleep for a while?”

“Yes but that was afterwards.”

“Are you sure for that looks like quite a blow to me.”

“I am sure.”

“Tell me about this other world then?” Dahy said not really believing him, “Did you see the bringer of fire’s pot?”

“Yes but it was just a fire mountain.”

“And was it full of kings?”

“Well yes but they were not kings as we know them.”

“Sorry, so what were they like?”

“They were not much different to us in looks but they could talk to the animals and speak without opening their mouths.”

“Talk to the animals, see it is the Netherworld.”

“No it is just another kind of man that’s all. They say that it is humility that makes them kings.”

“What don’t let Arg hear you say that he claims bloodline back to Kenna himself.”

“Maybe so but from what it seems Kenna was a liar and believe me if you had seen the cat master you would never claim to be Master of the World.”

“It is a demon we are talking reality here.”

“It is not I can quite assure you of that. The only difference is that it’s hair around its head and not fire, it only looks that way.”

“No I cannot accept that.”

“It is but half a Moon away you are most welcome to make the journey back with me.”

“You are serious.” Dahy said and thought awhile before saying. “That means that the

Netherworld does not exist.”

“Well it might do only that it does not exist there.”

“But the cat master, he does not exist. What we think is the Netherworld is actually just a different one. How did it come to be that way?”

“Who knows,” Petan said and thought awhile giving Dina a chance to do his work. “It came from a time of long ago when man had not travelled out this far. The very brave had and some had gone even further. Most stopped at the mountains thinking that the vast distance they had travelled meant it was the end of the world. The ones that went further perceived that they had gone over the edge of the world and thought they had arrived in the Netherworld and that’s how the legends came to be.”

“Amazing it seems you have come back a wise man. You must tell your story tonight at the assembly. It might bring good cheer for we are in need of a lift at the moment.”

“Really, what has happened?”

“Same spear different way. It is pointing at the clan Dinna now. They ambushed our warriors when out on a hunt. They killed Tino.”

“Arg’s son, how is he taking that?”

“We have fought them twice already. Three of ours have fallen and though they have lost more they can afford to because of their numbers.”

“And what started it. Was there a reason for this ambush?”

“If there was I do not know it I’m afraid that you have returned at a time of war.”

“Nothing unusual I suppose. I am debating about turning around and going back for this is a world I no longer want to live in.”

“We need you now our numbers are low.”

“Yes, that is the only thing stopping me. But after this no more.”

“You mean to return back, may I come with you if you do.”

“Why not,” Petan said and they headed back to their cave complex. Petan on arrival was greeted by Arg himself, “It is good to see you back, we have need of your spear.”

“Dahy has told me of the clan Dinna,” Petan said.

“Yes, they took my son away from me and now they must pay. But anyway that will keep. You must tell us all of your adventure tonight for we are in need of a story.”

“Yes, but first I must sleep.”

“I understand, you must be tired after your travel. I will call for you when it’s time.”

Petan entered the Netherworld and came face to face with the Earth Mother. To him she looked like Deara, his mate who had been killed two cycles earlier. He had not found a mate since for they were fairly sparse on the ground.

“Deara, is that really you?”

“I am the Earth Mother,” the Earth Mother said, “This is just how you see me. You are a king now.”

“So it’s all true then, Dina was right.”

“I have need of your service but I don’t think you are quite ready yet,” and with that hoc appeared, “This is hoc, he is to guide you,” and with that disappeared.

“Petan, good to know you, now earlier you were talking to Dahy.”

“You seen that?”

“I see everything,” hoc said and showed him a large pool. Petan looked into it and saw himself asleep. “I never knew,” he said

“Goes with the job did you notice anything unusual?”

“Sorry?”

“When you seemed to know how the Netherworld came to be.”

“Well yes now that you mention it.”

“That was Dina. When you stopped to think about what you were saying you allowed him the chance to speak.”

“Really, so how does it work then?”

“Thought and memory you are the thought and he is the memory. You have your own memory but he is now your races memory. You are a tree and he is the forest if you like. Now I have to make sure that you realise that you are just another tree in the forest so your thought memory gets to see the big picture and becomes part of the forest again.”

“However are you going to do that?”

“Humility.”

“I thought that I already had it.”

“You have, but you are having difficulty keeping it.”

“I am, I was not aware of it.”

“That’s how it works for it works in darkness, now first memory. You have the knowledge of your race because you removed the obstacles that were in its way.”

“I did. When was that?”

“When you discovered the Netherworld was just another world and the creation myth a story to enhance man’s ego, these restricted your imagination. Once you discovered that they were false it unchained your imagination and it became part of the whole.”

“And thought?”

“Slightly different, memory is for the clan and thought is for the self. You seem to be still having trouble with the notion of kingship.”

“I know what it means now.”

“Maybe but you don’t understand it. You got angry over Arg being the king.”

“And why not it is a lie.”

“There you go again it’s called righteous indignation and when you have it you deny yourself access to the collective memory. You stop Dina doing his job.”

“Right,” Petan said not realising the significance of what hoc had just said so hoc said, “When you have humility you have the collective memory behind you and so are wise, when you have righteous indignation you only have your thoughts memory behind you and so are foolish.”

“Oh, so I am cleverer when I keep my temper.”

“Wiser, for you still have your animal cunning, this can make some clever too.”

“Yes, Arg is like that.”

“Well now you know that it’s stopping you, you might want to deal with it. What do you think?”

“Yes, if I can.”

“Righteous indignation then what is behind it?”

“Anger?”

“No, that is the effect of it. You really want to find out what causes it to do any good.”

“I wouldn’t know where to start. All this is new to me.”

“Fair enough it is caused by envy. You envy Arg his kingship.”

“I am not aware of it.”

“That is because it works in darkness. Your perceptions of king ship in your thoughts

memory see it the old way for it has not quite come to terms with what a king actually is. This will go in time for you will lose the thought side and just become the memory. It is a gradual shift in consciousness that is brought about by knowledge.”

“Really.”

“Allow me to help it on its way. A king in the true sense of the word is a humble man. He is an innovator and a shaper of the land and has the power to communicate with the animals. His will is the will of the Bringer of Fire and his nature that of the Earth Mother from which he gets his strength. That is a king no more and no less. Far from granting privilege and getting the best meat isn't it?”

“Well yes.”

“While you are humble you can be a true king but if you perceive it in the other sense of the word you fall to either pride or envy and so lose your power at the source.”

“Can I stop myself from doing that for I want to be a true king?”

“You just have you made a conscious decision with your free will. It just needs time to sink in.”

“Oh, it's done then.”

“The process has started itself. It needs a little time to evolve now. You are to give a little speech tonight I hear.”

“That's right. I am to tell them of my travels.”

“Tread with care these ideas of kingship will not go down well with the king. Don't tell them of the Nethals powers either for envy is quiet strong in Man. If he thought they had them he would surely kill them for it has happened once before.”

”You mean there have been other types of Man?”

“Only one the ancestors of the Nethals.”

“So I could be leading them to destruction. I wouldn't want to do that as they are good people.”

“Not destruction but re-generation.”

“But what of the carnage there's bound to be. I see Man now truly as he is. I know I am of his kind and in truth it sickens me to have to admit it. These are beautiful people, they are the true Masters of the World yet I know that if Man ever met them he would destroy them. His view of mastery is the spear and theirs wisdom. They would soon be no more.”

“Don't make judgements it is not our place to judge. That comes from the thought side out of indignation.”

“I can't do it. I fear that I would have blood on my hands.”

“It is only a matter of time. It won't be long before they are crossing the mountains, lack of space will drive them on. Why do you think that you war so often?”

“So it's going to happen anyway. It is only a matter of time.”

“Yes, now imagine if they chanced upon them unaware of their existence. What do you think will happen?”

“I would say that they would kill them. Yes, definitely.”

“Man always kills what is alien to him but if he was to know a little about them and realise that they are peaceful it might save their lives. It is going to happen that they'll meet so think of it more as damage limitation if that will help.”

“Not much I fear it will still end up with the death of the Nethals.”

“They'll live on just as Dina lives in you,” and disappeared.

Petan woke up with very mixed feelings. He had heard hoc's words and could see the



wisdom of them but he did not want to see the Nethals destroyed because of him. He knew it would only be a matter of time but he reasoned that if he kept quiet it would not be in his lifetime and so they could have their paradise a little longer. By the time he had got to the assembly he had made his decision. He went to see Dahy and told him that he had come to his senses and realised that it was not another world but the Netherworld. The blow on the head had taken him there. He still told them his story though made it the Netherworld and received so much praise that his humility suffered and Dina could work no longer. Petan was right in his guess that it would not be in his lifetime but nevertheless it did come to pass. Lack of land made it happen. An expedition was sent across the mountains and returned with news of another world. The warring clans united in the single aim of conquest and a large force was sent to uphold that aim. Carnage greater than anything seen then happened and the peaceful tribe of Nethals quickly fell. A few escaped over the mountains and hid there for safety sake. The ones that were left, the males were killed and Taga was beaten and hurt once more. It was the start of a merging of races and from it new man came to be.

And as for the characters of the tale? Petan lost his life in an inter clan feud with the Tuda clan just before his 40th birthday. Arg himself died not long after and without a surviving son the kingship went to Arg's brother who died a Moon later. Dinu took to the mountains and learned to live in relative comfort. He was with a group of nine, each one now immortal so he had good company and developed a loathing for man that was alien to his Nethal heart. Dina went back to the Earth Mother with apologies for his failure.

"Not even I can go against man's free will," the Earth Mother said, "You did as good as could be expected and should be pleased with yourself."

"You think so, could I ask you something?"

"Sure, nothing is hidden from my children."

"Why is that then, free will I mean? Why can you not go against it?"

"It would be like going against my Self I can only guide man like a mother guides her son. It hurts me when I see him fall but I can only advise him for he has free will."

"And what is so special about free will?"

"It's not free will that's special no in fact free will is a down side to me. No, it is his power to reason."

"His reason, I thought that pretty shallow."

"That's why he needed the Nethal but the actual power of reasoning I'm talking about is more for utilising the knowledge available to him."

"From the universe," Dina said remembering.

"Yes, without man the Earth would probably get by but with man it could excel."

"And all this knowledge is there a purpose behind it all?"

"To create perfection so that everything will find its niche and run itself."

"And then? What happens when it can run itself?"

"Then I can go on holiday, my purpose is served. I've even saved myself 'a patio' to sit out on and enjoy the Sun."

"Patio?"

"Never mind, no once perfection is achieved I intend to enjoy it."

"And if it's not an impertinent question could you please tell me how?"

"By living in the hearts of men, with their consent that is."

### 3. Dryda's Story

Petan's refusal meant more knowledge lost but the cycle went on once more. Man's mergence with the Nethals opened up a new world to him and not just physical it was also mental, he became a superman. This mergence was sporadic though for old man still survived in places and though still aggressive he was no match for the new. The process of the mergence took time to evolve and with the severe weather conditions and natural disasters it was a very long time indeed. It was still evolving at the time of Dryda's story so I had better give you a picture of its state of play.

Man's growth all through his years was restricted by the ice and not only that his lifestyle of hunter gatherer meant he needed much land to hunt on to survive. This kept the population stagnant and with no new innovations the old were refined as far as they could be and left at that. The influx of the Nethal brought in new ideas it is true but most of it was only information that man had once knew but had lost to time through bad story telling. Dwellings were one example but there were many others. Basically speaking Man had still not clawed back all that was lost from the golden age before the mother's purge so although advanced for his limited range in comparison he was less technical then he had previously been. The ice though had ebbed back continuously overall and opened up more land to him. Some had even managed to cross it and find new land but the ice had returned behind them and blocked their retreat so they were lost to Man for awhile.

Others had carried on through the re-grown forest and pushed the boundaries that way. So the world was much larger to them than before and could sustain more people than before but without agriculture it was not many, so much for his physical growth. His mental growth was not that much better for he could not get rid of his pride and so deprived himself of his true potential. The influx of the Nethals had not brought much change in at first because of it. But it was coming though for certain men still found humility and though barely scratching their true potential it was enough for them to stand out and be called 'the beyond men.' This came about because of the new deviousness of Man for that too had been refined over time. The notion that kings could consort with demons had long been discredited so they just disregarded it. Instead they said that they dealt with the Earth Mother direct for she lived with them through the secrets they knew. This was a bit of a blessing to any one that was humble for it meant that as they were no longer perceived a threat by the king they were safe from inevitable death. It also meant the creation of a new post for consorting with demons although rare still continued though not for innovation for location of prey and other hunting methods. These men, for they had the ability to enter the spirit world (the name Netherworld falling from grace after its discovery) were called beyond men and this is the story of Dryda who was one of them.

Now Dryda was truly a humble man but lack of imagination had stopped him achieving his true potential. He thought that he could only do magick for that was all that was open to him since the king had claimed the Earth Mother as his own. Quite ironic really because you do not have to be humble to do it and most of the people classed at the time as beyond men were a prime example of this. Dryda was different though but his ignorance kept him in his place. He did not even know that he was a totem though that was about to change. One night he journeyed to the Underworld (called the spirit world in the day) and came face to face with his first love "Dilla?" he said in shock for she had been dead for seven cycles, "Is that you?"

“No Dryda,” the Earth Mother said, “I am the Earth Mother.”

“That is not possible I am not a king.”

“But you are Dryda, truly you are.”

“I am not of the bloodline, I cannot be king.”

“A king it is not a singular thing. You are a king and you are much more. You are a totem and from you Man first came to be.”

“I do not understand,” Dryda said and with that hoc appeared. “I know you,” Dryda said, “It is you that tells me where to find the animals. I thought this was the Underworld.”

“It is but it is also the spirit world, it is only your races imagination that says it’s different.”

“Hoc will help you to release your true potential,” the Earth Mother said and disappeared.

“Well before we start is there anything I can clear up for you?”

“One or two things actually especially now I have found out that the two worlds are the same. Is there anything else that is not what it seems?”

Hoc laughed and said, “Is there anything that is?”

“What it’s not that bad surely.”

“Tell me of your Creation myth we’ll do that one first.”

Dryda thought awhile and said, “In the beginning the Great Ball of Fire shined down its love and from the tears of the Great Earth Mother there sprang forth the spirits of animals. Each one was different from the rest and each one was different in strength. The strongest one was the spirit of man, much stronger than the great bear spirit, so it was given the job of carrying the Earth Mother so through this she might take her place as ruler of the world. The spirit of man found Grend and made its home in him and all that followed him.”

“And your views on that?”

“It’s a story, no more.”

“Do your stories not hold hidden information?”

“Some do, not that one though.”

“What about the Earth Mother living within you? Is that not true?”

“Well not me but Grend’s bloodline.”

“If I said to you that the Earth Mother lived not only in you but in every one of her animals what would you say?”

“So anyone can be king, it is not some privilege bestowed at the beginning of time. Well if it was true that is.”

“It is true but you said king when you should have said a king so that’s our next misconception. What makes a king a king and why does that make him deserving of privilege?”

“The Earth Mother lives in him. He deserves favour for it is the Earth Mother inside him that we serve.”

“And is there anything else that makes him different is it just that the Earth Mother lives within him.”

“I guess so for that is the only thing he claims his power for, well that and the secrets he withholds.”

“Then if that’s the case he has no claim to privilege for everyone can claim the same. Not only that though, by withholding secrets he is actually hampering your evolution.”

“Is he. How?”

“He doesn’t understand them. Some of you might though but how will you know if you don’t see them?”

“I see, yes, that makes sense.”

“The second secret says that only a humble man can consort with a demon. Did you know that?”

“Er, no,” Dryda said and thought awhile before saying, “But that’s true because our beyond men can do it and they’re humble.”

“Most of them are not. Why do you say that first of all?”

“Ignorance I guess, for that is what I’ve been told.”

“Well let me enlighten you, anyone can consort with a demon to find prey that is not a demon’s true role. A demon’s true role is to help man evolve and he can only do it with a humble man that is a true king. A demon gives a king his innovations to be used for the good of man.”

“So the title means nothing.”

“On the contrary, in your races sense of the word it means a curse to anyone who claims it for their withholding of the secrets could actually hamper Man’s development.”

“You know I can see that for although Garf is king I would not say that he was happy.”

“The curse in action, to truly understand a king you will have to talk to a Nethal.” (After the massacre of the first Nethal tribe the rest received mixed receptions. Some actually lived in semi harmony with man and from that mergence of ideas man got more understanding within a couple of generations. Others shunned man and hid from him often going back to land man had previously vacated and yet others lived in partnership with mutual trust. The Sun cycle mentioned in the previous story did not occur for many generations after the first meeting giving the races time to assimilate)

“They would not tell me anything. They despise us and after the way we treated them who could blame them.”

“The Earth Mother shall clear the way. She will tell them.”

“You mean they can consort with her,” Dryda said and then, “Sorry, you said that any animal could because she lives within them.”

“They are true kings and if you want to know what a true king is take their example.”

“If they show me.”

(He lived a lot further north than the first massacre. The Nethals that lived near him were the ones that escaped and hid from man in his own land)

“They will, once you have proved yourself humble for even with the Earth Mother’s guidance you will still have to prove yourself to them. They have suffered hard under Man so it is only natural there will be mistrust amongst them.”

“I agree. I fear I would feel the same.”

“But time and a good heart will clear the way. So, what’s next? Ah, totems. Back to the Creation myth then.”

“I did not realise that it had any relevance.”

“The spirits of animals are totems. They are the essential characteristics of the species. When you summon me that’s what I summon to find your prey. So basically according to your legends you are Grend.”

“Well I never knew.”

“It was not the right time to. Before I go any further though, you will have to learn of true kingship,” and disappeared.

Dryda woke up slightly confused and stayed awhile to reason it all to himself. He could make no real sense of it all, only that he was Grend and he was going to be a king but that did not make sense so he vowed he would see a Nethal. He made his excuses and left for the mountains for that is where he had heard they would be. He told the king he was going to get new understanding though never mentioned the Nethals and from this the concept of the vision quest was born. It was 3 days before he saw his first Nethal and it did not get off to a good start.

“What is it with you men?” the Nethal said, “Have you not persecuted us enough?”

“I can understand you,” Dryda said, “Yet you do not speak. How is that?”

“What do you want from us now,” the Nethal said not answering him, “Why don’t you just leave us alone?”

“I mean no harm, I have been sent to you by the Earth Mother.”

“Don’t mock the Earth Mother,” the Nethal said angrily, “You are too arrogant to truly know her. You desecrate everything that you touch,” and left him alone. Dryda just sat on a rock and waited for he had nothing better to do. He had not expected the degree of hostility though so he sat and reasoned his next move. After an hour the Nethal came back and said, “You are not welcome,” and threw a stone axe that narrowly missed Dryda before running off and out of sight. Dryda picked up the stone axe and studied it. It was far superior to anything he had seen, much stronger and better designed. He thought that he would have no chance of winning the Nethals confidence so reluctantly he kept the axe and headed for home.

Three days he had walked and just for one axe was the thought that carried him all the way home. His bitterness disappeared when he arrived home though for he was treated like a hero and lauded like a God (I use to term God but the concept of God did not come about to a lot later). His humility suffered at this for with all the new prestige it had no room to work. It took another visit to the Underworld to put him wise once more.

“Quite the hero,” hoc said, “But what about kingship..Oh I forgot, you must be one already because you can consort with demons.” (Dryda had neglected to tell Garf that he had got it from a Nethal)

“Ah,” Dryda said as realisation hit him, “But they wouldn’t have helped me anyway. You never seen him, he did not want to know.”

“But I did,” hoc said and took him to the pool, “I see everything.”

“That’s amazing,” Dryda said as he watched himself sleep.

“So your first meeting was no good. Well, you got an axe out of it though.”

“You want me to go back; it seems a waste of time.”

“The results will be worth it,” hoc said and disappeared.

As luck would have it Garf was of the same mind for he called on Dryda as soon as he awoke. “That was a great gift that the demon granted,” he said, “the Earth Mother was very pleased with it. But she was thinking that where there was one gift there might be many so with that in mind I would like you to go back once more.”

“But what of my work with the hunters?” Dryda said because he did not want to go back still thinking it a waste of time, “I cannot be away for so long.”

“Don’t worry; it appears that we have been blessed with two beyond men. Cul will take over whilst you are away.”

“Very well,” Dryda said seeing he had no other choice, “And when I come back will I still have my place?”

“Well I have been giving that matter some thought. Cul seems to be better suited at finding game than you. Maybe he’s more humble, I’m not sure.”

“So he is to have my job, what of me then?”

“You will receive the gifts and bring them back to us. I am sure there can be many more.”

“Six days I have travelled, that’s a long time walking.”

“The Earth Mother has given that matter some thought too. You are to live away from us.”

“Sorry?”

“You will live half way and I will personally come every half Moon and collect what you have been given.”

“Its wilderness, I can’t live there.”

“You will find a way. I will come with you and the Earth Mother will tell me the best place.”

Dryda had no choice so the arrangements were made and a suitable cave found. He just sat outside it and looked around and bemoaned his fate. He knew why the king had done it. He wanted to take credit for anything else he came back with and so wanted Dryda well out of the way. He also knew that he had got the axe by chance and there was little chance of it happening again so the king would have a lot of wasted journeys and not be too pleased with him. He was in a bit of a dilemma to say the least, one that could cost him his life and had cursed him to loneliness. His thoughts were interrupted by another, “Are you back again, what is it with you?”

He looked up to see the Nethal and said, “I have no choice for I am now cursed to live here.”

“Then not only are you a Man which is bad enough,” the Nethal said, “You are a man considered bad by others. So bad that they do not want to live with you. Well neither do we.”

“No, I am a good man. I am humble.”

“Humility, that’s a concept alien to Man. Define it for me for I fear you do not know what it means.”

Dryda thought awhile but could not define it for he had always believed it was the actual act of talking to a demon and as that had been shattered he had nothing left to build on.

“When you can define it then maybe we shall talk again,” and left him alone to his sorrow. After he had gone and Dryda had wasted many hours in thought he fell to sleep none the wiser.

“So they are starting to accept you,” hoc said, “Good.”

“But what is humility they want me to define it.”

“I could tell you but I fear you would not understand it.”

“I will take the risk for I fear it is the only way they will talk to me.”

“Very well, humility is the ability to put others before yourself. It is also called selflessness and is a state of mind in which you do not exist as an entity but as a tool for the Earth Mother.”

“So the king must be humble then.”

“Do you think that he really consorts with the Earth Mother? I mean I would hardly call his actions selfless. He condemns you to a life of misery just to enhance himself in the eyes of his people.”

“I sort of worked that last bit out and that leaves me with a little problem. If I cannot

come up with anything else he will surely kill me.”

“Yes quite a problem. The Nethals will gladly share their knowledge with you and that should appease him but first you must win their trust.”

“So it’s back to humility then,” Dryda said and thought awhile, “Is it when you don’t exist as an individual but as an extension of the Earth Mother?”

“I apologise it appears you have grasped it, I have under estimated you. If you tell them that they may accept you but I caution you it is alright just knowing it you also have to prove you are to them. You must always put others before yourself that is what they are watching for.”

“I’ll bare that in mind.”

“Then you will go far incidentally it was the Earth Mother that wanted you to come out here.”

“So she can consort with the king.”

“Well unlike you he has neither seen nor heard her. She just put an idea in his head and his selfish pride took over. Originally it started off to save you a walk but his cunning nature perceived it that it could be turned to his advantage. You see the ability is still within him but his pride takes over and as it can only see its own reward it turned it to his advantage.”

“Oh, so the Earth Mother wanted to save me a journey that was nice of her.”

“No, that was what she told the king. She wanted you here and out of the way so you can do her work in relative peace.”

“Her work?”

“To help Man to evolve, you are to become a demon.”

“What am I to die then?”

“No, what makes you say that?”

“Don’t you have to die to become a demon that is what our legends tell us?”

“Only your pride, with pride you can only enter the world of conscious awareness without it you can travel to all the worlds. I won’t get too involved with details because you will understand when you get there.”

“I hope so. So what does the Earth Mother want me to do?”

“Help a king but be discreet for you might be putting her in danger.”

“Her I thought that kings were male.”

“Kings are anyone that can consort with a demon it is the art of humility that makes a king, not a gender.”

“I never knew, you mentioned danger?”

“Yes there was a bit of a blip I’m afraid. I was once an enemy. Under a different form I was the Masters of Wisdom. They will try and stop her progress so you must tell her never to take credit for anything given to her.”

“A bit like me then,” Dryda said seeing the irony.

“This is not a stone axe we are talking about. It is the ability to travel back in time.”

“What? How is that possible?”

“There is only time in your world. When you leave it you can travel out of it”

“And how far back are we talking about?”

“You could not measure it; it is a very long time indeed.”

“As far as Grend?”

“Much further, Grend is but a late comer to the history of Man.”

“Then that sounds quite an adventure and I should not be bored here.”

“Good, the Earth Mother thought you would like it.”

“And when can I start?” Dryda said anxious to begin.

“Now if you like. You must take the form of an elderly man and teach her how to climb a tree so she might be able to get nuts.”

Dryda left and came back again, “It’s done.”

“Good.”

“I have promised her that I would teach her how to hunt though.”

“It is meant to be that way,” hoc said and disappeared.

Dryda woke up and saw that the Nethal had returned. He looked at it and said, “It is the ability to put others before yourself.”

“Then maybe you do have it,” the Nethal said, “For you would not have known it otherwise. What are you outcast for anyway?”

“Well I am not,” Dryda said and went on to tell the Nethal about how it came to be.

After he had finished the Nethal said, “It seems your pride was a mixed blessing for I fear that if you would have told the truth they would have come and destroyed us.”

“There is that I suppose.”

“Our tools you are welcome to borrow and we will give you some to give to your king but we will ask one thing of you.”

“Anything.”

“You must never reveal how you got them for it would certainly bring about our ruin. Would you swear that to me but not as a Man as I know that is worthless. I want you to swear it to me as a humble man.” Dryda duly swore that he would keep it secret and the Nethal was happy with that, “My name is Cato, I am, well me and a few others are, of the tribe Caton. We live close so I will come to you with the tools so our location will remain secret.”

“I understand, you do not trust me.”

“Nothing against you, that is the word of our elder. No man may enter our camp.”

“Fair enough I can understand the reasoning behind it but I was sort of sent here to see you. I was told that you would tell me how to be a true king.”

“You were, this is new to me. I will have to get back to you,” Cato went out of hearing distance and said, “Great Mistress, sustainer of life. Have you sent us a man to destroy us?”

“No Cato,” the Earth Mother said, “You are to teach him of kingship for he is a totem of his people and I have work for him.”

“He brings trouble with him, like rats he brings disease. Our camp is no longer safe while he is here for if you see one you can guarantee there are a hundred behind him.”

“Now Cato I hold your safety above all else. If you think that he will give you away, don’t reveal your camp to him. I would not have sent him if I thought he would bring danger to you but if you do not feel safe you know what you must do.”

”Fair enough and you want me to teach him kingship?”

“Only if you think him worthy, let him prove his humility to you first.”

“You are most wise,” Cato said and the conversation ended, Cato went back to Dryda and said “It appears you are right.”

“So you will teach me?”

“You will have to prove your worthiness to me and after your races treatment of us that



might take a long time. It has been decided that if you can prove yourself I will come and teach you.”

“So I am not allowed in your camp. I must stay here alone.”

“It is for the best. I cannot put the other Nethals at risk. Here you are, far from our camp and here you’ll stay.”

“But I have no one for company.”

“That was the decision of your king; we have no blood on our hands. We, well I will come and visit you when I can but that is as far as we are prepared to take it.”

“Then I have a long time of loneliness ahead of me. Mind you it was my own fault I should have left that axe where it was. None of this would have happened then.”

“Maybe it was meant to be. I see that you were world travelling when I first came. If that is your purpose then you could not have picked a better place to be. I am guessing that this was the Earth Mother’s idea so I would probably be getting in the way of your progress if I invited you into the camp.”

“You think so?” Dryda said unsure.

“You need the type of lifestyle that she has given you. This will keep you focused and make you more aware for the job.”

“Really, so you think of this as some sort of blessing? It seems to me more of a curse.”

“Time will tell but I think you will find it will come down on my side. I must go now for the elder is calling me.”

“You can communicate over such a distance?”

“Goes with the job,” Cato said and started to leave.

“Will you come back soon?”

“Soon,” Cato said and walked off.

## **Chapter2**

Dryda’s journey to the Underworld saw him coming face to face with the dragon. As he had not seen the like of it before it scared him slightly.

“Fear not, “the dragon said, “Like you I am of the same essence.”

“And what do you want from me?”

“The Earth Mother told me that I must reveal myself to you and tell you all about myself. Though I do not know why as that is your next question.”

“Then tell me about yourself and how you knew I was going to ask that question.”

“Common sense to the second question and the first is what I have come to do.” She went quiet for a while to collect her thoughts before saying “I am Dragus. I was created by the Earth Mother to help her in her strive for perfection. My purpose it to root out the bad and anything that gets in the way of Man’s progress. I am a protector too so I am either here for your destruction or salvation depending on your choice,” and with that disappeared.

Dryda next found himself with the Earth Mother and hoc, “So the problem with Garf is now sorted,” hoc said without greeting, “That should save you a lot of worry.”

“Well you have replaced it with a new one whatever was that creature that I have just seen?”

“That was a dragon; it is an agent of retribution.”

“And she looked well up to the task. So what are you showing her me for, I am alright aren’t I?”

“You’re fine the purpose of that will come out at a later date. It has no relevance now so it does not matter.”

“Fair enough, as long as it means well I will not be worried.”

“Good. So are you ready to give another lesson?”

“Sure. I was going to teach her how to hunt from the trees.”

“Change of plan. She has made a promise not to hunt the monkey and that is the only thing worth hunting in the trees.”

“She will be disappointed. She looked pretty excited about it.”

“That cannot be helped, offer her something different to compensate her and hopefully she’ll be happy.”

“Alright. Have you any ideas?”

Hoc thought a while and said, “Hens. Tell her that if she could offer them protection they could let her have some of their eggs. She must also promise not to kill them until they are old and of no further use.”

“Fair enough,” Dryda said and disappeared. After a second he was back again, “I don’t think she liked it.”

“It is the best we have to offer, she will come around in time. Your job is done for a while.”

“That’s a shame. I was getting to quite en..” with that he disappeared.

“She must have summoned him,” hoc said and looking at the Earth Mother, “This has all the bearings of your workmanship.”

“Well it had to be done. He has summoned demons himself, it is only by being summoned himself can he atone for it.”

After a couple of seconds Dryda returned, “That was unusual, it was like she could compel me to do anything that she wanted, I felt powerless.”

“Not a nice feeling is it, that’s how I feel when you summon me.”

“I apologise, I did not realise.”

“Yes ignorance can be very painful sometimes.”

“I will not do it again. Not now that I know the suffering it causes you.”

“You are welcome to use it but please do it only when you are desperate.”

“She made me promise to teach her how to hunt the deer. I hope I have not done wrong.”

“No, you had no choice in the matter. Don’t forget that I have been there myself.” With that a bow and a set of arrows appeared, “Show her this and teach her how to use it.”

Dryda disappeared once more but was back in a second, “All done.”

“Good, we can stop here or we can continue, it’s up to you.”

“Well I do quite enjoy it and she is pretty easy on the eye.”

“Dryda,” the Earth Mother said, “I thought you only had eyes for me.”

“Ah,” Dryda said not really knowing what else to say.

“Just teasing,” the Earth Mother said and changed from Dilla to Ti “Is that better?”

“Teach her about the five ages of creation,” hoc said, “That will keep her busy for a while.” Dryda disappeared and was back just as quickly. He was a lot more nervous then when he left. “She has upset the dragon,” he said, “Those hens belonged to her.”

“They do not belong to anyone,” the Earth Mother said, “None of my animals are to be slaves. I will go as you in your place,” and disappeared. “That sorted that out,” she said on return and disappeared once more. She appeared again and said, “All done. I have told her all she needs to know for the present”

“Is that it?” Dryda said, “I did not realise it would be so easy.”

“Your work is done with her,” the Earth Mother said, “If anything else happens I will take over.”

“Fair enough is there anything else I can do whilst I’m here?”

“Nothing to do,” the Earth Mother said, “But stay awhile and give me your company. I will open up my world to you.”

“Sure there are many things I am ignorant of and I don’t want to cause undue pain.”

“A noble motive,” hoc said and disappeared.

“Don’t mind him,” the Earth Mother said after he had gone, “He has quite a low opinion of Man.”

“Really, mind you I would not blame him as mine isn’t too high.”

“They are still growing. Give them time and they will come good.”

“Quite some time not in my lifetime I guess.”

“You live forever; you just change your shell and persona that’s all. Anything with life is eternal.”

“I never knew, so we all live on.”

“Well the part of you that is me does. Your selfishness dies along with the shell and all that is left is the spirit.”

“And what happens to your spirit, where does it go when you die?”

“It reforms and then goes back on the cycle. It atones for previous actions and hopefully gets more aware of its Self.”

“Self. I have heard it mentioned but I thought you have to get rid of it. Didn’t hoc say something about selfishness?”

“That is the negative self, the personal self; it was put in place to aid basic survival but like everything else it had evolved. No, the Self I am talking about is the part of me that lives within you. You have to lose your negative self before you can become fully aware of me.”

“And how do you do this. Humility?”

“Well that is more of an effect. You actually lose it by becoming aware of me. It is a gradual shift in consciousness brought about by knowledge of me as opposed to Earth knowledge which is what I give you. The other knowledge is called light; it is what your mind is made of so as it gets stronger the mind gets stronger. Now your mind animates your body and that is life. Existence is body animated by mind animated by Self. (think of  $E=MC^2$  the constant being that all matter has inbuilt mind potential.)”

“And the Self comes back to a new body, I think I understand.”

“Good, just to finish it off light comes from the Sun and that’s why it is called the Bringer of Life.”

“Ah, we call it the Great Ball of Fire.”

“You change so often I cannot keep up with you.”

(The concept of the Sun as the Bringer of Life was a short lived one. It had been the symbol of a radical new thought school that said that the Sun was more than its association with fire. It had reasoned that the Sun’s heat was what made the flora grow and so was the bringer of its life. The old name of the Master of Fire fell from grace as it was decided that Man was the Master of Fire so it must have had a deeper meaning. The concept’s final fall was when it was decided that as life also lived underwater out of the Sun’s heat it could not be the Bringer of Life and so a back to basics drive occurred)

“Er, sorry,” Dryda said not really knowing what else to say, “You mentioned going back on the cycle, what’s that?”

“The cosmic wheel, the creator of time but that is all for now for you have a visitor,” and disappeared.

Dryda awoke to find that 3 days had elapsed and he had company. It was Cato and he had brought with him some tools.

“It seems that you have only just left me,” Dryda said unaware of the lapse, “Did you not go back to your camp?”

“I’ve been and come back again, it’s been 3 days.”

“Not to me. It seems like one night.”

“You have been world travelling,” Cato said upon realisation, “Time goes quickly with it. What seems like a moment can actually be a day. That shows humility, well that’s what the elder said when I told him you could do it. He said only a humble man can do it.”

“Does that mean you accept me? I can come and visit you now?”

“No, it is alright having it now but you have to keep hold of it.”

“You need time I understand.”

“Besides you are world travelling now and need the solitude.”

“Well there is that I suppose.”

“And if it’s any help it has been decided that if you can prove yourself humble you can come and live with us.”

“Really, yes, I would like that. I need only come back once a fortnight when I have to see the king then.”

“Oh no,” Cato said dismissing it straight away, “If you move in with us you will have to cut any previous ties. We could not risk it otherwise.”

“So I have to turn my back on my people that would be a great loss to me.”

“I thought that you already had after all you will never see them again.”

“Sorry?”

“It appears I know your kind better than you do. You have been isolated and will quickly be forgotten.”

“No, I will give him the tools and after awhile tell him that all have been given.”

“And then?”

“Go back with him.”

“I doubt it. I would say that your king will take the credit for all we have given you. How would it look if you came back for I bet the king has said that you are dead already.”

“So you think he means to kill me. I never thought.”

“Well I guess that the rest of your group think you are dead already He will only be making it reality.”

“And then he says that the Earth Mother told him. What a fool I have been. I will hide the next time he comes so he will go away empty handed.”

“No, you will give him the tools one at a time for that is the humble thing to do.”

“Is it, how?”

“Why should the good of the group suffer for the actions of one man’s pride? When you can look at it like that, then you are truly humble.”

“I will give him the tools but I do not agree with it. Maybe when I am truly humble it will make sense. I will wait and see.”

“Good,” Cato said and showed him the tools. They were far superior to the ones Dryda’s

people had.

“He will be very pleased with them,” Dryda said “Definitely a cut above.”

“You had better hope so for they are the only things keeping you alive. Give him one or two each time he comes and that should prolong the agony.”

“And then? I am finished.”

“If you have proved humble there is always our camp. You could never go back to your people but under the circumstances it would be wise not to.”

“He has left me no choice really but thinking more deeply it is not such a loss.”

“Anyway more good news I have been asked by the Earth Mother to help you attain humility.”

“Really, great.”

“Get rid of your pride, it is the only way.”

“Oh, is that it?”

“It’s as easy as that. You don’t want to make life difficult.”

“Fair enough but how do I actually get rid of it?”

“I don’t know. I’ve never had it.”

“A lot of use,” Dryda said and laughed to himself.

“See, it’s not that bad, as I said I’ve never had it but I guess it’s all to do with perceptions of Self. If you perceive yourself as an individual you get proud and if you see yourself as a people you get humble, well unless you are a proud people of course.”

“You don’t exist you are just an extension of the Earth Mother,” Dryda said remembering his conversation with her.

“So if you can think that way you are humble. It is not difficult really.”

“Well I suppose not. And how do you think our people ended up proud then?”

“The notion of being Masters of the World has a lot to answer for. It was only natural that it would evolve to some thinking they were masters of men.”

“Kings?”

“That is what they chose to call themselves and then you have your elders.”

“The lawmakers.”

“Yes, the power got from being the king was quite contagious and spread through the family.”

“How would that come about then? You would think that the king would want to keep hold of it.”

“Your bloodline system was to blame for a lot of it. Not all kings are of the same temperament. The son is not the father. If the king was weak he would give power to his brothers and once given it is seldom returned. The brothers themselves claim power as they too were of the same bloodline and you also had other people who thought they were masters although not of the king’s bloodline. Yes, your version of kingship causes a lot of needless upheaval. And the rest of you have to survive in the social climate around it.”

“And your version is it different?”

“We are all kings there is no power to be got from it. Well not the sort that man craves anyway.”

“And what is the difference between the two?”

“Your power goes to the personal self your own basic survival instinct. Ours goes to our people’s welfare for we have mentally evolved past basic survival. The power you get only exists in your imagination while ours comes from the Earth Mother. It is not a black

and white thing though for the power is also within you when you are humble.”

“And this power what can you do with it?”

“Anything that you can imagine you can world travel, consort with demons, you have the memory of your race so you know a lot more things, you can understand your dreams more for when you come back the transition is much easier. I could go on but as I said anything you can imagine.”

“Quite impressive and I guess a good gauge to my humility. When I can do all that I will know for sure that I am truly humble.”

“Yes, you are close because you can do most of them. Time should take the rest of your pride for you are now no longer in a proud environment. You do not have to survive in that social climate any longer. You’ll soon adapt to this one.”

“So it is literally only a matter of time.”

“Yes,” Cato said and went quiet before saying, “Your king approaches.”

“He’s early I suppose he’s getting greedy. I suppose you had better hide.”

“We have time he still has a while to journey. Give him the scrapers that should keep him happy. If he asks about the demon world embellish it a bit, it will give you something to laugh about later.”

Dryda hid the rest of the tools and said, “You are welcome to stay around as I shouldn’t think he will want to stop too long.”

“No, he will want to stay the night after his travelling. I will go and return back another day. Watch him though for he is a lazy king. He will try and get you to move closer back to save him a walk.”

“Would he risk that? I would not think that he would want me too close.”

“Yes that is quite a dilemma that is going through him at the moment.”

“You can read his mind?”

“Anything you can imagine he now thinks a day’s journey should be sufficient and had just remembered a place that will do for the purpose. You must refuse him because I cannot travel that extra half a day. It will bring me too close to the rest of your kind.”

“What will I tell him?”

“Be humble and you will be guided he is close now I will see you when I get back,” and left. A few minutes later Garf made his approach. Not wanting to appear desperate he brought him up to date with the news (As I have not mentioned anyone else from the clan I thought you would find it boring so I skipped it) and then got down to business. “So Dryda, the Earth Mother has asked me to find out if you have any more gifts.”

“I was given these,” Dryda said and gave Garf 2 scrapers. Garf examined them with the awe of a modern man and a U.F.O. and said, “These are amazing, you have truly done well the Earth Mother will be pleased.”

“That’s what I am here for.”

“So what’s it like then, the place that you go to I mean. Cul said that it is a world of shadows, is that true?”

“This is a different world to the one that Cul goes to,” Dryda said getting into his flow.

“It is a world of fire and intense heat. It is not the world that the good demons live it is the world where the bad demons live, the one’s that come out at night. They are hideous creatures, the cast offs of creation. Half man half beast they eat the flesh from the bodies of the men they find while they scavenge at night here.”

“Ah,” Garf said, “That is what happens to them,” and thought awhile before saying, “The

Earth Mother says that we must put them underground from now on to hide them from these demons. Anyway do they just give you the tools?"

"Well no," Dryda said and pretending to go sheepish, "I steal them."

"I would not worry about that the Earth Mother wants us to have them so it is not stealing. These are truly not of our world," and examined them once more. After a while he said, "The Earth Mother wants you to move to a better place than this. She has showed it to me, it is half a day's journey away."

"I cannot leave here, it is forbidden."

"Forbidden? By who?"

"By the Great Ball of Fire his is the world that I enter. He told me that I must stay here although he did not tell me why."

"Dryda tread carefully," the voice of Cato came into his head, "You are backing yourself into a corner, tell him that you steal the tools with the Great Ball of Fire's permission because he wants to test the demons."

As if on cue Garf said, "But you steal from his world?"

"With his permission, it is to test his demons. I could not enter his world without his permission."

"Oh, and I wonder why he wants you to stay here?"

"I couldn't guess and I didn't presume to ask. He said that as long as I stay here he would allow me to enter his world. If I move he will stop the privilege."

"Then you must stay, the Earth Mother will understand, he will explain it to her when he sees her tonight." (The people of Grend believed that the Underworld was the domain of the Earth Mother and the Sun stayed there at night. All the demons were cast from the Sun at night to give them both some privacy leaving the demons forced to roam the Earth at night)

"Yes, I guess some matters are between them alone."

"So tell me of this world it sounds pretty frightening."

"That is not the word for it. The burn on your face is unbelievable it is like standing in fire."

"I can imagine the Great Ball of Fire must be hot."

"Hot it not the word for it I have never come across such heat and the demons, coarse, ugly creatures. Some half man, others half and half with other beasts. These are the failed animal spirits, the ones that Creation forgot. Fire comes out of their mouths as breath and the smell of burning flesh would choke you. It's not a place I would go to too often, if they ever caught me I would hate to think what they would do to me."

"But you are going back aren't you?" Garf said thinking that Dryda was having a change of heart, "The Earth Mother insists."

"It is for her that I do this but it is a terrible place."

"She will be grateful," Garf said and Dryda noticed his relief and this led him to a hardening of heart. He reasoned that he actually had power over the king for the king needed him more than he needed the king. He said nothing but made a mental note of it.

"Yes," Garf said looking at the scrapers once again, "Well worth the torment." He put them down and Dryda made and lit a fire as it was getting dark.

"The bad demons will soon be out," Garf said hiding the scrapers, "This does not look a good place to be at night."

"I have seen strange things I will admit. They are definitely not from our world I can tell

you.”

“Yes,” Garf said looking around, “Do you think they are watching us?”

“Undoubtedly, many a time I have seen them try and get to me but they cannot,”

“They can’t?”

“No, the Great Ball of Fire keeps them away from me.”

“So we should be pretty safe,” Garf said with a hint of relief, “The Great Ball of Fire will see to that.”

“Well me. Mind you, you should be safe because the Earth Mother walks within you.”

“Er yes,” Garf said nervously, “Sure.”

“They come in the day as well. They try and trick me by pretending to be men.”

“Can they do that? I thought they could just come out at night.”

“Mainly night some can though. No, you have to be very careful. The first time it happened was at night. A strange man came to me and said he was lost. I asked him who he was and he changed into a wolf and ran off.”

“Really,” Garf said getting more uncomfortable and vowing never to stop the night again, “It must be quite an ordeal.”

“Well not really as I said, I’m protected while I live here so I will not come to harm. The other world though, now that is an ordeal.”

“Well the Earth Mother appreciates it as will the rest of my people when they see these. When all this is done you will come back a hero, I will make sure of that don’t you worry.”

“I trust and appreciate your word. You are a true and noble king, a son of Grend himself.”

“Yes, you have no fear of that I will look after you myself personally. How many more tools do you think you can steal then?”

“I do not get enough time to have a real look around as you can imagine.”

“No, I guess it must be straight in and straight out.”

“Well I wasn’t looking to tell you the truth. I just grabbed the first thing that I saw.”

“Yes, I would do the same. You do not want to stand around where there are demons about.”

“What’s that noise?” Dryda said suddenly and Garf nearly jumped out of his skin.

“What?” Garf said nervously, “I didn’t hear anything,” and looked around before saying, “This fire should drive them away.”

“Ah, it might actually attract them.”

“Do you think so?” Garf said and looked around once again.

“We’re alright,” Dryda said, “We are both protected. I would feel sorry for any other man walking around tonight though.”

“Yes,” Garf said and moved closer to the fire. Again and again Dryda heard strange sounds and it was a very frightened Garf that went to sleep that night.

### **Chapter 3**

Dryda’s journey to the Underworld saw him back with the Earth Mother. “It appears you have a guest Dryda,” she said without greeting, “It is good that you can entertain,” and laughed.

“Well he does want to kill me I wondered how he would get on with fear that was all.”

“Not too well by the look of things. He does not seem to be an able king even in his sense of the word. I did notice one thing though Dryda, you developed a hardening of the



heart.”

“I did, when?”

“When you realised that he needed you more than you need him. You thought that, that gave you power over him and in a way it does. If you seek that kind of power you cannot have mine though. It is one or the other I am afraid.”

“Oh, I did not realise.”

“Try and keep it under control and you should be alright. Forewarned is forearmed I say.”

“I’ll bare that in mind. You were going to tell me about the cosmic wheel if I remember right.”

“That’s right, the cosmic wheel,” the Earth Mother said and hoc appeared. “The wheel of time,” he said without greeting, “The cosmic wheel was put in place as a perpetual motion gauge to time. The great cycle lasts that long it divides into 12 parts each over 2,000 cycles. These are called ages. One completed the cycle goes around again and this carries on for infinity. That is the greater wheel. Within it lies the elemental wheel and this turns along with each Age. It goes through Earth, Water, Fire and Air before going back to Earth again.”

“And what is its purpose?”

“It was put in place to help Man develop. Each Age brings forth new knowledge for Man to use in his quest for growth.”

“And what happens when Man is fully grown?”

“He becomes timeless for he has transcended it. Until then though he has to keep coming back to grow in understanding so he might be worthy of his purpose and that is to tend the Earth. From that Man got the idea that he was the Master of the World and, well the rest is history.”

“Oh,” Dryda said, “So that is how it came to be then,” and hoc disappeared.

“Well that’s cleared that up then,” the Earth Mother said, “Now, not only does he have to contend with that there are also mine and the Great Ball of Fire’s cleansing. These can be catastrophic to Man and a major obstacle to his progress. These too come in cycles and so we have to work around them.”

“Sounds complicated, and can they hamper Man’s progress much?”

“They generally wipe out most of the life on the planet and the few that are left have to start rebuilding again. The Great Ball of Fires is less devastating though for it just sends certain species sterile and they just die out.”

“And Man has to work around that?”

“That and localised disasters. It helps to make him more adaptable though so some good does come out of it.”

“Not for the people involved though,” Dryda said with a laugh.

“Not individually but as a race. Anyway that will be it for awhile as your king has awoken. He did not sleep too well as I gave him a nightmare to make him think that he entered the world that you made up,” and disappeared.

Dryda woke up to see an agitated Garf who said, “This must be the entrance to the world of those bad demons for I too have travelled there.”

“Did you find anything of note?”

“No,” Garf said, he had been too scared to take too much notice of his surroundings. “I was told that you must stay here that was all. You are right. It is a scary world.”

“Do you think that is why the Great Ball of Fire wanted me to stay here? To be close by.”

“Undoubtedly.”

“That must be why the Earth Mother told you to bring me here in the first place then. I wonder why she changed her mind and wanted me to move?”

“She never said,” Garf said uncomfortably because he was in the middle of an assessment. He reasoned that as the world existed and as that was indeed the entrance to it she must have actually told him. Sure it was the first cave he found at a distance suitably far away from the clan but he must have been guided to it he reasoned and so the Earth Mother did indeed walk within him. Quite a potent thought to a man with heavy delusions already

“Anyway,” Garf said getting up and retrieving the scrapers, “I have a long trek ahead so the sooner I start the sooner I finish. I will come and see you every quarter of a Moon instead of half for the Earth Mother told me that you needed the company,” and left Dryda to himself. Not for long though as Cato quickly joined him. “He took his time,” Cato said, “I thought he would never go.”

“I thought you were going back to your camp,” Dryda said in surprise.

“I decided to stay and see what one of your kings actually looks like. Bit of a disappointment actually.”

“I started to think the same way, especially when I saw how easily scared he was. And to think that he has the power of life and death over you.”

“What? What sort of people are men. However did it get to that stage and why ever would he want such a power?”

“It has always been like that.”

“And you never questioned it?”

“Not really a good idea especially as he has the power of life and death over you.”

“So you are held by your fear then. That is a strange way to live your life isn’t it?”

“Well I don’t know about that. I wouldn’t say we were held by our fear.”

“You are, especially you. You know that when you have given him those tools he will kill you. Is that not being held in fear?”

“Alright but he needs me at the moment.”

“That is your fear speaking and it sounds like it is quite engrained.”

“We all have fear it is part of our nature.”

“It is the degree of it that should concern you. If you like I could help you to ease it.”

“You could, how?”

“By taking away your fear of death that will only leave your fear of pain for as I reason you are now nearly humble so have lost your fear of humiliation.”

“You accept me then?”

“You might still have a little bit to travel but I would say that you are safe now.”

“Then I can move in straight away and this situation need no longer exist.”

“You forget the tools and we have also been told to reveal other things good to your kind to you.”

“Looks like I am staying here a little longer then,” Dryda said with a hint of disappointment, “Well if it is the Earth Mothers will.”

“It won’t be too long. Now he has decided to come more often you’ll soon be finished.”

“Literally.”

“It won’t come to that. The last things you just leave and he will think that the demons have caught you.”

“So I am safe then,” Dryda said with a sigh of relief, “I can see him believing that after last night.”

“Yes, fear is quite a potent force. Tell me something Dryda, when you know you live on, why do you fear death?”

“I don’t know it just creeps up on me.”

“It comes from your personal self for that is the only part of you that actually dies. When you can lose that fear you become your greater Self. No longer the tree you become the forest and have the memory of your race.”

“You mentioned that before and used it as a sign of humility. So to be truly humble I must lose my fear of death.”

“Well not quite, when you have lost your fear of death it is because you have lost your pride, it comes naturally.”

“And how do I actually lose it?”

“I have never had it,” Cato said and thought awhile, “You lose your pride by looking at the big picture and realising that you are part of the Grand Design. This gives you a true sense of purpose and takes away your pride. When it dies then so do you for you are now no longer your fear of death you are your sense of purpose.”

“Really, I never knew.”

“You did it is all within you.”

“The Earth Mother,” Dryda said upon realisation, “So you are truly a king.”

“It still means the wrong thing to your personal memory, in time that will change. We are all kings it is just that some of us do not realise it. I guess to Man it does not come easy.”

“It is a hard thing to realise but I guess I am getting close.”

“I must leave you now, when I return I will bring a surprise for you,” and left him alone with his thoughts. He was not alone for long though for he had attracted the attention of a wolf, “Is there no where safe from Man,” it said to itself but much to Dryda’s surprise he could understand it.

“I mean you no harm,” he said but not out loud as he got used to conversing with Cato that way.

“You can understand me,” the wolf said coming closer, “And yet you are not a Nethal. How is that so?”

“I’m not sure in fact I am just as surprised as you are.”

“Maybe you are a good man. Our legends talk of such a phenomenon. I never expected to actually see one though. Maybe there is some truth in them then.”

“Maybe, I would have to hear them though.”

“Fair enough do you mind if I join you then?”

“Sure,” Dryda said and made him welcome, “I am pretty interested in what you have to say.”

“Our legends tell of a time when we walked and hunted together. It was a partnership of mutual welfare. You could magick our food so it tasted, well I could not describe it, and we talked like brothers, we had understanding of each other.”

“And what happened, what do your legends say?”

“They talk of the sky turning black and raining down hot grey dirt on us. Many died and we parted company. You used to be good people, whatever happened to you?”

“This is long before my time I have no recollection. To me we have always been this way.”

“What do your stories say do they mention it?”

“No I have never heard them talk of this.”

“Yet you yourself can talk to me so it must be true.”

“I suppose so,” Dryda said and a sudden thought came into his head, “Maybe it’s because we killed the dragon” This confused Dryda because he was not aware that it had been. The last he had heard was that the Earth Mother was going to sort it out; she had not been pleased about the dragon thinking she owned the hens.

“The dragon still lives,” the wolf said confused, “It cannot be killed. It sounds to me that your legends are built on lies” Dryda said nothing as he was still in shock so the wolf continued, “Is it not true that you claim to be Masters of the World?”

“That’s what they say I don’t believe them myself. You have seen the dragon then?”

“Not me but some of my kind have. She is a friendly benign creature I hear she is wise beyond judgement. I don’t see how slaying her would make you Masters of the World though. Perhaps you don’t understand her?”

Dryda was about to say that, that was not the legend but realising that his was just as implausible changed the subject slightly, “So she must live close by then?”

“I’m guessing though where ever it is it is well hidden for we have never found it.”

“I have seen her myself she seemed quite frightening to me.”

This confused the wolf so it said, “Then why did you say she was killed a long time ago? That does not make sense,” and got up and left.

After he had gone Dryda sat and pondered on why he had thought the dragon dead when obviously she was still alive and drifted off to the Earth Mothers domain.

“Because I told you it was,” the Earth Mother said enlightening him as soon as he got there.

“But she isn’t.”

“Well she was but I had to reform her.”

“And is that what caused the sky to blacken?” Dryda said thinking that was why she had said it.

“No that was one of those purges I mentioned. See how the wolf, even though he does not live as long as you his legends go back a lot further than yours.”

“Yes I noticed so why did you tell me that then?”

“To prove I could get in touch with you and to guide the subject around to the dragon. I want you to pay her a visit for she has some wisdom for you.”

“Er sure, she will still remember me won’t she?”

“No, that was in her old role that you saw her. She was my agent of destruction. She has reformed now and is a species aid, yours.”

“Oh, so she will be pretty friendly then and I won’t have any trouble getting this wisdom.”

“She will be friendly but you will have to prove yourself to her.”

“Sorry? In what way.”

“That you are humble of course otherwise her wisdom would be wasted and maybe even put to bad purpose.”

“Oh,” Dryda said with a sigh of relief.

“Don’t worry it’s not a test of strength we all know the strength of the spirit of man,” and laughed.

“I cannot be blamed for the lies of my ancestors it is not my fault they got deluded by

their pride.”

“Don’t take on so Dryda I am just teasing you. I will guide you to her lair tomorrow for you will never find it otherwise. Have no fear though for if you are not ready you will not suffer, well only ignorance,” and with that disappeared. Dryda woke up to find he had slept through to next morning. Much to his surprise the wolf had returned and had with it a rabbit. “I brought you this,” it said, “I want to see if you can magick it.”

“Me,” Dryda said not knowing what he was on about, “I wouldn’t know how.”

“But you are one of the old men. You can talk to me like they could; you should be able to do it.”

“I could cook it for you I suppose but I don’t know about magicking it.”

He skinned it and then made and lit a fire. As they watched it cook the wolf said, “That’s a good smell, I have never smelled anything like it.”

“It’s just cooked meat we don’t like eating it raw.” After it had cooked he gave it to the wolf who eagerly ate it. “Now I know that it is true,” it said when it had finished, “Never in my life have I tasted anything like it. It is truly not from this Earth.”

“It is just food to us.”

“Then you have been spoilt for there is no finer taste than this. If I got some more will you put it on the fire monster again?”

“Yes sure but leave it for a little while for I have to go and see the dragon.”

“Really, you will have a job to find her for we have never,” and left him to go and look for some more prey.

Dryda's journey under the Earth Mother’s guidance was surprisingly quick and he was soon outside the dragon’s lair. Reluctant to go in he called to her and she invited him inside. It was a large great cavern and she stood in the middle exuding in glory “An unusual visitor,” she said, “We do not often see your kind around here, are you lost?”

“No, the Earth Mother sent me.”

“She did whatever for?”

“She said that you would give me your wisdom if I proved myself to you though I don’t really know how to prove I am humble.”

“The fact that you got here in the first place proves that. You must have been guided by the Earth Mother.”

“Then you will reveal your wisdom to me,” Dryda said with relief.

“Well we’ll speak a while so I might get to know you then I will know for sure.”

“Fair enough,” Dryda said for if the truth be known he was quite intrigued by the dragon,

“What would you like to know?”

“Are all men like you or are you a totem?”

“I have been told that I am a totem, does that make a difference?”

“Well it might do. It might mean that the knowledge I give you is for you alone. That will be a matter for your discretion though.”

“It will?”

“Yes, if you think that the rest of your kind are not ready for it then do not tell them.”

“But then they will never know, wouldn’t that make it pointless?”

“You are a totem. You will still be here when they are ready to hear it. If you get killed you will come back as a demon, if not then you will live forever.”

“You mean that I might live here forever?”

“For just as long as you remain humble. Definitely a good thing wouldn’t you say?”

“Well yes, definitely a good thing to know.”

“I thought that you would know that. It was one of the things left by the Earth Mother for you.”

“I’ve not long found out that I was a totem,” Dryda said sheepishly.

“No not just you. The secret said that Man could live forever. It is not just the totem.”

“Secrets, are we talking about the secrets of the kings?”

“Everybody is a king so it is no real secret.”

“Not in our world I’m afraid, only a select few call themselves kings.”

“Well you must be a king to get here yet you don’t know. How has it come to be that way?”

“They only call themselves kings they do not truly know what it means to be a king.”

“They probably lost the power when they kept it a secret that’s a strange turn of events.”

“I think it was the power they gained from it. It was a different sort of power, one more refined.”

“Then maybe you do know these things for that was one of them.”

“It was, that’s news to me.”

“Spiritualism defines reality and materialism refines it. So if they lost their power what chance would those perceived as non kings have? Yes, I can see it happening.”

“These things that have been kept secret may I hear them?”

“Sure,” the dragon said, “You might know some already,” and started to list them, when she got to within him walks the Earth Mother Dryda said, “That is the reason that Garf claims his kingship. Through his blood line to Grend.”

“It lies within all of you and finally Man has the power to fly.”

“Really now that I did not know.”

“It does not mean physically it means mentally. It means he has the power to travel to all of the worlds of creation.”

“World travelling I can do that.”

“It is only natural everyone can, it’s just that they are not aware of it. The more humble the more aware you become.”

“Oh right, I understand that.”

“So all this has been withheld from you. I would say that if that’s the case man will not be ready for my wisdom for a long time How can he grasp those concepts if he doesn’t even know them.”

“It seems we are truly ignorant it embarrasses me to have to admit it.”

“You’ll be waiting a long time before they are ready but time is nothing to a world traveller.”

“True, I suppose my time here already has gone quickly. I was away for 3 days and it only seemed a moment.”

“Well you’ll be waiting for a lot longer than that. So anyway the wisdom that I have to give you is the wisdom of understanding. It will make you a lot more aware of the environment around you and from it you will get a deeper more meaningful reading of life itself and your place in the Grand Design. What I have to tell you is so important that no one who is not ready to hear it must hear it. If ever they do then they can alter Creation it...” With that Dryda disappeared and much to his horror found himself not only face to face with Cul but also in his power.

“Great spirit. Dryda is that you?” Cul said in surprise.

“It is I,” Dryda found himself saying. It was the first of three questions that Dryda was compelled to answer.

“What are you doing here?” Cul said because he was still quite shocked and did not realise he was wasting his questions.

“You have summoned me,” Dryda found himself saying.

“Oh right,” Cul said coming to his sense and realising he had only one question left

“Where is it that we might find the deer?”

“To the north of you, a quarter of a day’s walk,” Dryda found himself saying before he was back with the dragon.

“What was that?” she said, “One minute you were here and the next it was just your body.”

“I was summoned I was compelled to answer 3 questions.”

“Summoned, by the Earth Mother?”

“No, by another man.”

“I did not know they could do that that is some power they have a hold on.”

“I did not realise that myself though thinking about it I should have done because it has happened before. I thought it was just one time, just to uphold the balance.”

“Uphold the balance, do you mean that you have called one yourself?”

“Yes we use them to find out where the animals are.”

“And you know the pain that it puts them through. How could you force that on anyone else?”

“It was in ignorance I’m afraid,” Dryda said sheepishly, “I did not realise, I did not even think to realise.”

“And they can force you to answer anything. They just have to ask you.”

“I guess so, we never used it for anything else except locating game but the force in which I was held with was strong enough I would say.”

“That is not very good news, no good at all.”

Dryda was of the same mind because he said, “I think that your wisdom will not be safe with me. Maybe when they outgrow their little games it will be.”

“In my eyes not only are you eligible you are most welcome to it but you are right. If you can be compelled then you have no control over your answers or actions. Come back and see me when they have lost that power and I will gladly enlighten you.”

“Thank you,” Dryda said, “It is for the best and though I would have liked to hear it I will be patient and wait my time.”

“Good and you realise that you are most welcome to visit me while you wait and don’t dishearten it won’t be too long for time is not the same in our world.”

“True and besides I think the things you told me so far will keep me busy awhile.”

“Yes, a fine people you are from.”

“Not any more,” Dryda said and they said their goodbyes.

#### **Chapter 4**

The wolf was waiting on Dryda’s return, it had two rabbits and was eager to see him

“Here you are Old Man,” he said, “I’ll hunt them and you cook them.”

As they sat and watched it cook the wolf said, “Do you think that we could live together under those terms?”

“Well sure but soon I will be moving to live with the Nethals, they would have to agree

to it.”

“Oh,” the wolf said with more than a hint of disappointment, “I fear that I play a little too rough for them. They will never accept me.”

“My king returns soon, what about living in the world of Man once more?”

“I don’t know about that they chase us of as soon as they see us.”

“I could have a word with him.”

“Are they all like you? What I mean is will I be able to understand them?”

“In time maybe, I will offer him your terms and see how he likes it.”

“You men are good hunters already he will not want me.”

“What about if I told him you would defend his territory like it was your own and guard him as if your life depended on it?”

“Yes sure it will be just like changing families again. Yes, if you think it will help you can tell him that.”

When the meat was cooked they ate a rabbit each and talked further into the night until sleep took them in its grasp. The next day went pretty quickly with nothing of any note happening and the following day Cato appeared. He had with him some skins and they were far superior in cut and design to the ones Dryda was wearing. Not only that they were considerably warmer and when Dryda put them on he could tell the difference.

”This is amazing,” Dryda said, “Yes, I could do with one myself.”

“You are welcome to make a copy of it for yourself and looking at those rabbit skins it looks like you have already started collecting for it.”

“Waste not want not,” Dryda said with a laugh, “But I definitely think I will take a copy of this.”

“Just that and I will show you how to make a dwelling and that will be enough for him. Give him all the rest of the tools when he comes next time and make sure that he doesn’t see your new skins.”

“Fair enough, I will make sure that they are well hidden. He won’t be coming much more then.”

“No that will probably the last time that you see him.”

“And the other stuff? The skins and dwelling?”

“I will show you how to make it after he has gone. We could leave just before he gets here.”

“Sure,” Dryda said and they talked some more. “So,” Cato said, “You will be leaving the world of Man soon, do you think that you will miss it?”

“I despise it already, it is one built on lies.”

“You’ll not miss it then. That is good for we do not really want you to get homesick.”

“Not much chance of that, not much chance at all.”

With that the wolf came back with a rabbit and said, “Oh, I’m sorry. I did not realise you had company. Cato.”

“Canus,” Cato said, “You are unusually polite.”

“Ah.”

“He is to come and live in the world of Man. It will be a bit more boisterous for him there.”

“You will like that,” Cato said, “It will suit your temperament. Remember one thing though; if you fight with them always let them win.”

“I’ll bare that in mind,” Canus said and slinked of.



“You two don’t get on?”

“We tolerate each other. No, he’s a good animal he is just a bit too energetic for me.”

“He’ll burn that out hunting. No, he should be alright. He won’t be able to understand them though. Mind you that means he won’t have to suffer their lies.”

“Now Dryda, you want to be able to control your bitterness for it could lead you into trouble.”

“I don’t know how,” Dryda admitted.

“Ask the Earth Mother she will know.”

“I wouldn’t know how and besides I don’t think that I am that humble.”

“Just say to yourself Great Mistress, sustainer of life and then ask her your question. She is all giving, she will not mind. I will leave you a while and go and talk to Canus,” and with that went looking for the wolf.

After he had gone Dryda said, “Great mistress, sustainer of life please tell me how bitterness comes to be and how I might relieve it from myself.”

“Ah Dryda are you bitter?” the Earth Mother said, “Tell me what causes it first?”

“Well it’s all those lies and the fact that I built my life around them and wasted all that time.”

“You may build your life around many things but none of them are wasted for you always bring experience from them. When you truly understand that you will not resent anything but see it as a lesson in life.”

“What could I learn from all that though,” Dryda said unmoved, “It was just a pack of lies, there was no truth in it.”

“What about that I live in you did you not learn that?”

“Well yes, but not from man, he only said that you live in kings.”

“Which is true.”

“But his version of a king.”

“Then it was ignorance. Why should you be bitter about other people’s ignorance? Is it not the case that you should be grateful that you are no longer ignorant and feel sorry that they are.”

“I don’t know about that. What about the pain it has caused me.”

“Through pain you grow but you have no real pain Dryda that is just your pride talking.”

“What?” Dryda said upon realisation, “I thought that I had got rid of it.”

“If you had you would not be bitter. You would see the big picture but pride stops you. It sees things only in relevance to itself. It feels bitter for it thinks that it has been betrayed and in a way it has but you are not your pride so you have not been betrayed.”

“Oh, I never thought of it that way before.”

“When you see the big picture things get a lot clearer. You will not be bitter then.

Bitterness is prides pain, not yours.”

“Thank you Great Mistress that has eased it a lot.”

“Just talking about it helps release most of it. So while I am here is there anything else?”

“Well there is one thing. I don’t really know if I should bother with it as it sounds pretty trivial.”

“Anything, nothing is hidden, no matter how mundane.”

“I was wondering why the wolf and Nethal do not get on. I’m sorry I asked now and I guess that it’s none of my business.”

“It is all to do with world travelling, the Nethal can’t but the wolf can.”

“What is that it?”

“That was the cause but over time it has evolved. They are not mortal enemies though for neither of them are that vain.”

“Thank you Great Mistress,” Dryda said and then went to look for Cato. He found him with Canus and on seeing him Cato said, “It appears you are a man of their old legends. It seems that your kind has not always been proud.”

“Surprised me as much as it did you.”

“I must leave now. The next time I come back your king will be gone and then soon you may join us,” and left.

After he had gone Canus said, “Are you cooking that rabbit for I have quite a taste for half of it.” So Dryda obliged. After they had eaten Dryda said, “Tell me more about your legends so I might know of your kind.”

“Sure,” Canus said and thought awhile. “This one should suffice. Our legends talk of our forefather, a wolf named Canine who saved a man cub from his wicked brother Lupine. He tended the man cub and helped it to get home for he knew that the man cub had the secret of how to make the fire monster. Like brothers they were, so close that the cub let him become part of the family and man and wolf lived in harmony for a long time after.” “So without the wolf man would not have fire. Well if it’s true that is for you know what legends are.”

“That’s what I thought, until I met you I mean. I mean they talk in my dreams but what are dreams. Just mere flights of fancy at the end of the day.”

“No dreams are much more than that. They are gateways to other worlds.”

“Really, are there other worlds then, I never knew. You old men certainly have wisdom. So I might actually be going back to your world then. That is a surprise.”

“Yes remember your dreams because they are important to you.”

“I’ll bare that in mind.”

“My king comes tomorrow. Would you like to go back with him?”

“I’d rather stay with you at least I can understand you.”

“This will be the last time I see him for after that he will only come once more but I will not be there to greet him.”

“Why ever not?”

“For then he will kill me for I’ve served my purpose. So it is not a wise thing to hang around.”

“He does not sound like a good man but fear not, I will protect you. No harm will ever come to you while I am here.”

“I go on to a better life it is a choice I have made. He will not kill me because I will be long gone.”

“Definitely not a good man would I be wise to go back with him then? If he will kill a man so easily what will he do with a wolf?”

”You’ll be safe, he perceives other men as a threat, not you. No, I would say that he will treat you better than other men because of it. Anyway, not all men are like him.”

“I will have to take your word for it but I will give it a go. Beside if I don’t like it I can always come back again.”

“Yes there is that,” Dryda said with a laugh and the conversation ended shortly after that. Next day saw Canus hiding and the king making his entrance. “I was surprised to find you here,” he said, “Cul told me that you were a demon so I thought you must be dead”

That gave Dryda the start of an idea, "It is only a matter of time for I have been caught."

"They caught you, so what are you still doing here, did they let you go?"

"They let me go eventually but they took me through death first as a punishment."

"Really, what was it like?"

"The worst thing you could possibly imagine. Much, much worse than where the bad demons live. I saw torment and torture and inhaled excrement until I was nearly sick. If ever they catch me again they said they will keep me there. It was they that sent me to Cul."

"You said only a matter of time that means that you are going back doesn't it."

"It is for the Earth Mother I cannot disobey her."

"Good, she'll appreciate it," Garf said with a sigh of relief, "And I don't suppose that you managed to get anything, getting caught like that I mean."

"Not that occasion but I managed to make a couple of journeys before they caught me."

"Great," Garf said and Dryda produced the new tools. There was a smaller axe and more scrapers and a myriad of other utensils made out of stone, bone and horn.

"You have done very well," Garf said in marvel, "Surely there cannot be many more?"

"Two more things so the Great Ball of Fire said anyway. Hopefully one more trip should do it. Then I can come back. Have I been missed?"

"They think that you are dead actually, they reasoned, the same as me that you must be if you came back as a demon."

"It should be quite a surprise to them, when I come back I mean."

"Yes," Garf said and left it at that. His answer told Dryda that he still meant to kill him and this led to bitterness for he reasoned that to Garf his life was nothing. He had been made fully aware of this by the fact that the story he had told him did not raise an ounce of concern from him. He was about to say something but he heard the Earth Mother's voice, "Don't let your pride ruin it Dryda. He is power deluded and not to blame for his thoughts. It is his pride at work and nothing else."

"This seemed to ease Dryda so instead he said, "How is the hunting at present, did you manage to get those deer?"

"Not this time they seem too clever."

"They are easily tricked you just need a wolf that's all."

"Sorry, a wolf, how would that help?"

"He could drive them to you. They would run away from it, just get it to make sure it's the right direction."

"What wolf is going to do that? None, I think you might have been out here too long."

"It was not my idea it came from the Great Ball of Fire."

"Really," Garf said taking new interest, "I could not see them helping us though. It would not be worth their while. They can get their own meat easy enough so there is no real point."

"If you gave them cooked meat they cannot do it themselves so maybe you could work a deal."

"Doubt it, what makes you think they like cooked meat anyway, it's not like you could ask them."

"I did not need to the Great Ball of Fire told me that they did. He said it was time you lived together as friends," and with that he mentally called Canus who quickly appeared. Garf was horrified at this and said, "Is that one of those demons that come out during the

day?"

"No, it is a present given to me by the Great Ball of Fire to give to the Earth Mother. It is symbolic of his faithfulness and he told me that you should treat it well and always give it correct meat."

"A present for me?"

"Well for the Earth Mother."

"Whatever, and we can hunt together. With this wolf I will become the finest hunter. You must thank the Great Ball of Fire for me."

"What's he babbling about," Canus said, "I don't think I like the look of him."

"He is happy about going hunting with you," Dryda said quietly.

"It is not that big a deal surely, is he a bit simple?"

"Think of it as being easily manipulated. You should do well out of him."

"If I must but it a poor second choice that you give me."

"Fetch him a rabbit and that should make him happy."

"As long as I can have one myself for going it is not worth my while otherwise."

"Go on then, get away with you," and the wolf left.

"Where has he gone?" Garf said.

"I'm not sure, not too far though for he never strays."

"Oh, so is there anything else that has happened? It looks like you have been very busy"

"A couple of demons came around, about it really."

"That reminds me I can't stop over tonight. I've got a few things to sort out back home, you know how it is, matters of kingship."

"I understand in fact it is good that you can come as often as you do. It must be quite a trek each time."

"It must be done it is for the Earth Mother, who am I but an extension of her well being."

"Nobly put," Dryda said and with that Canus returned with a small pig.

"It was the only thing I could find," he said to Dryda dropping it by the fire.

"It will do nicely," Dryda said quietly.

"It's brought us a meal," Garf said, "It is truly a clever animal. It cannot be from this world as no other animal would do that for man. It must truly be a gift from the Great Ball of Fire. Don't worry Dryda I will look after it as if it was a brother." (Not really an apt expression as Garf had killed one of his brothers because it was a twin, politics eh!)

"What's he rattling on about now?" Canus said "I find that noise so grating."

"He is pleased with the pig and he said that he will treat you like a brother," Dryda said quietly, "He thinks you are a gift from the Great Ball of Fire."

"He is a bit simple then what ever made him think that?"

"I told him, he will treat you well now for he daren't do no other."

"You are a wise man. How is it that the simple one is the king?"

"It is a long story. You will find peace with him now and be treated better than any of his subjects."

"Because I am like his brother?"

"Better than his brother for he killed him."

"It is a strange world I enter and no mistake but as I said earlier, if I don't like it then I'll leave."

They ate the pig and talked some more and Garf made his excuses, took the wolf and tools and left.

Dryda was happy to see Garf go but sorry he had took Canus with him for he was a good animal to have around and if the truth be known he missed him. His thoughts on Garf were not that of hatred now, they were more of pity for he was ignorant of what he was missing out on. He did not feel bitter either for he realised that dwelling in the past was no good for the future and so he released it along with his pride. It was a happy Dryda that made his journey to the Underworld that night much to the Earth Mother's relief. "I thought you were going to lose it then," she said, "You were very close."

"Sorry about that it just crept in."

"It is gone now. You are no longer your fear of death you are your sense of purpose."

"Have I died? For I thought that was the only way I could lose my fear of death."

"Well everyone else thinks you're dead apart from the king but that will change next time he visits."

"So I am dead then when did this happen?"

"It is only a mental death. You are not controlled by time any more for that was the part of you that fell under it. It no longer applies to you for you are no longer part of the cosmic wheel."

"Oh and my sense of purpose?"

"When Man is ready for you again, until then take up with the Nethals and out of Man's way. I will inform you of any major changes don't worry about that."

"So take it easy then. Yes, I could live with that."

"First though you have one last thing to do. Nothing major, just tying up loose ends"

"Sure, what is it?"

"I want you to visit Canus in a dream and tell him he must not come back with the king. For if he does he will only go looking for you and with his sense of smell you'll be quickly found."

"Yes I can see your logic. I did not realise I could visit people in their dreams. That's a new world to me."

"You can do anything you can imagine as long as you don't use it for bad purpose."

"So you mean I could visit Garf then."

"Depending on your reason though I think if it's the one you are thinking of the answer is no."

"Shame," Dryda said and disappeared. He came back after a second and said, "It is done he will not come back with the king."

"Good, now onto your king. If you can give me a just reason then I will allow you entrance into his dreams."

"Well I can't really. It would only be one that came from revenge."

"Come now Dryda I am sure you could give me a just reason if you could put your mind to it."

"Really," Dryda said understanding her, "Well he has fallen of the path I suppose. He'll need some guidance I would say."

"That will do for me you have my permission."

"I think there may be more to you than meets the eye."

"It's for the greater good. I don't like my name being used to justify his crimes. You may take my form and hoc will go with you as Grend. Shake him up and hopefully he will change his ways."

With that hoc appeared and took the form of Grend and they both travelled into Garf's

dream time.

Quite inconvenient for Garf as he was in the middle of eating a deer.

“Is this how you use my power,” Grend said, “You are a disgrace to your bloodline and have brought shame to my name.”

“Who are you,” Garf said, “What do you want from me?”

“I am Grend and I am not pleased with you,” Grend said, “You have well over stepped your mark. You dare to use the Earth Mother for your own personal gain.”

“You say that you can consort with me,” the Earth Mother said, “How is it that I am not aware of it?”

“I er.. er,” Garf said not knowing what to say.

“Have you no answer for her,” Grend said, “You are a disgrace to your family. What sort of man kills his own brother, the true bearer of my name? You will never dare to presume that the Earth Mother walks within you. Hear me.”

“I understand,” Garf said with his head to the floor.

“It you ever do,” Grend said, “I will come back and the good lady will not be present to inhibit me in my actions.” With that they both disappeared and kings walked with the Earth Mother no longer.

Next morning saw Cato’s return and the dwelling erected. It was saplings sprung into place and tied together before covered with animal skins. It was roomy and very airy and pleasant to live in so Dryda did just that. The cave was now empty so he scratched drawings of animals in it and sat there at night, well lit by the fire watching them flicker. He found that he could enter the spirit world of the animal drawn and converse with its totem so the nights were never boring. He had to leave it all though for time quickly passed and Garf’s imminent visit was soon upon him but he found his new place with the Nethals just as fulfilling so it was not a loss. He did return occasionally though for it was en route to the dragon, a creature he frequently visited.

### **The Fall**

The Sun cycle hit the Earth and the Nethals grew sterile, not straight away as it had to evolve. The sperm count gradually got lower becoming non-existent. With no babies to tend the race could not renew itself though it never died off because the survivors were made immortal. Time saw most of them fall to either accident or Man but legends say that they still survive to this day in lands that Man found too inhospitable. Their innovations lived on with Man though and from them Man advanced his technology. He could adapt better to the elements now and so could travel the vast expanse of ice that still covered a sizeable portion of the land. His new much warmer skins and movable dwellings made the ice if not a friend then slightly friendlier and opened up more opportunities for food and travel and population growth.

And the characters of the tale? Garf lived a long and unhappy life tortured by thoughts of Dryda and demons. He had reasoned that they must have caught him because he was not there on his return. He had meant to take Canus but could not locate him so went alone. He saw that as a bad sign because it meant that the Great Ball of Fire was displeased with him and enhanced by the dream of the Earth Mother he did not feel popular at all. He feared death because he reasoned that when it happened he would get his own retribution and so adopted a very safe lifestyle. Not a good choice really as he was quickly deposed and soon ended up as the lowest of the low. Canus found a new master with the next king Garf’s younger brother Adel and grew to be quite fond of him. He reasoned that although

he was not as good as Dryda he was far better than Garf and besides the king's meat is always the best. And Dryda? He still lives today in a remote part of South America although man is closing in on him. Time will tell if they ever find him.

## 4. Dinu's Story

After the first Nethal massacre Dinu and a few others took to the mountains. In such a vast area they were reasonably safe and if not prospered they got by pretty well. His hatred for man intensified as time and new experience did their work and this was to prove quite a handicap for the Earth Mother as she needed his service to help Man evolve." Dinu, don't forsake me" she would call but his heart was hard and he would not answer her. Time and again she called but still he never responded. When his time came she had to send Dina, as him, in his place which raised quite a problem for Dina still had his own purpose to serve.

Man was ignorant of all this of course and as the great cycle turned once more he was still coming to terms with his new influx of technology. The glacier no longer a foe to him he travelled extensively and met with other men, leftovers from the original clans and ideas and skills long forgotten to them were re injected with new vigour. By the turn of an elemental wheel he had conquered and mapped out the world and agriculture was back in vogue. His produce, much richer than today because of the fertility of the Earth then, made him grow tall and strong and live to ages unheard of by people today. Mentally speaking he was at his prime, his power of imagination supreme and his creative ability meant innovation a way of life and demons passé. The world was a much better place, well that's not strictly true. Men were restrictive in the knowledge they would reveal to other men so not all men evolved at the same pace. This meant that some clans were not as advanced as others either technically or intellectually and as equality is not a word in pride's vocabulary the world was quite a bitter place. By the time of the turn of another elemental wheel the situation was not better in fact it was worse. Slavery had come to be though it was more for forced labour, agricultural and building great structures for Man was now bored and in need of diversion. Having long ago found that the Earth was round Man looked to the stars and dreamt of other worlds and found he could actually travel to them for mentally it was in his power. He had not got humility though for he had got it by force. With no need to hunt he could ask other questions which the demons were compelled to answer. He quickly unearthed all the secrets available to him at the time and from it evolved to superman and like any comic book hero had superpowers to back him up. He could compel matter to move with the strength of his mind for he now knew the mantra. He could travel his mind to the world of conscious appearance and re materialise his astral body anywhere in this world or any other. He could harness the Earth's energy field and travel great distances as if just a stroll and tap into her records so past present and future were all one and the same. Nothing was hidden from him neither in time nor space. He was pretty aware as you might imagine and this led to quite a lot of boredom for life had lost its edge somewhat. He needed a sense of purpose and so trivial pursuit was invented and gigantic stone structures erected. Wars were common place for they not only fought with each other they had the less evolved clans and their resentment to contend with. As the elemental wheel turned for the final time of the great cycle great civilisations came to be. A global network for trade and mutual sharing of information between the supermen had been set up long ago and from it cities developed. These were generally allied for mutual protection against the numerically much superior lesser tribes though internal disputes often raised their heads for arrogance still abounded. Cities evolved to Empire builders demanding tribute and labour from the lesser tribes and found themselves in conflict with



other cities that had the same idea. Cities overran other cities only to be overrun by other cities that had been overrun in the first place. It was a vicious circle that had no end for by the time that it had fully turned Man had recovered enough of his number to keep it going ever onwards. Man was heading for a fall and as the only letters left in the Creative Cauldron spelt 'shift' it meant that it would be quite a major one. We are talking about a shift in the Earth's axis and the mass flooding that would follow it. We are talking about an event so major that it became engrained in folk memory in much the same way as the famine and an Irish Celt.

Not only that it was an event so cataclysmic it wiped out all traces of the supermen, their civilisation and even took the fertile soil that lay beneath their feet. Man was nearly wiped out, the only real survivors came from the lesser tribes who proved more adapted than superman in his man made environment. Some did survive though, not enough to make any real difference but enough to carry some of the knowledge into the post deluvian world. Man's lifespan decreased rapidly for the soil lost its goodness and without it he aged quickly and lacked his power mentally speaking. And the shift in the axis, how did it come to be? I'm afraid that you have to use your imagination for me to tell you. Okay? Good. Now imagine a ball flowing through space just spinning freely and with fluidity. That is the Earth at this moment. Although it is carrying weight it is at both poles and so exerts little interference. In much the same way as a global atlas it spins freely for the pressure is only on the ends. It has not always been the case though for the Earth has had ages of ice and these have exerted pressure in weight and displacement much akin to dragging a finger on the globe mentioned earlier. As the ice diminished though the pressure got less and the Earth managed to free itself with one might jolt that sent Atlantis the dominant culture of the time to the South Pole. The flood was a by product of this jolt and monuments of remembrance were put up by the supermen to signify its date. Dinu was getting a little more amenable by then. He had taken to talking to the Earth Mother and she had even given him as a totem the power to visit her in her world. It is on one of those occasions that our story begins.

"Why do you hate man so?" the Earth Mother said, "I do not like to see animosity between brothers."

"Brother," Dinu said with contempt, "He killed my brother."

"Dina is a totem; he lives forever, the same as you Dinu. You too are a totem; I have been trying to reach you for what seems like an eternity."

"I know I am sorry about that."

"Dina has took your place."

"What, how did you manage that?"

"With great difficulty he had to cajole the man and could only come when the Moon was at full strength."

(Although Dina and Dinu were brothers in the land they inhabited different worlds of creation. This meant that Dina had no purpose in Dinu's world unless he was given one by Man and even then he could only go when the Moon was full for that being a water element was when he was at full strength)

"And he did alright, he did not forget anything?"

"He did all I asked of him though the transference was not complete as I left some for you."

"You did?" Dinu said in surprise.

“Yes I want you to meet a humble man to prove to you that it does lie within Man’s grasp.”

“Oh, what about if I just took your word for it and left it at that?”

“You could do but then you would be missing out on seeing Dina for he lives in that man through the knowledge that he gave him.”

“I did not know, no that cannot be.”

“The man you’ll see is a humble man he has no pride, that is where Dina now lives when, well if you meet him then you will understand.”

“If I must.”

“Good, you will tell him of the herbs but only after he has proved himself to you for it must be clear in your mind that what I say is true.”

Dinu disappeared and was back just as quick, “It is true, what a fool I have been.”

“No, you have been cautious and who could blame you after all you have seen. Man in ignorance is cruel and barbaric when humble though he is truly your brother.”

“I am not sure about brother it is not a word that comes ready to me.”

“It is true; you are just another aspect of the same thing. One of the seven that’s all.”

“Sorry, one of the seven?”

“The seven spirits of creation would you like me to tell them to you?”

“Please, I’ve never even heard of them.”

“Then I had better explain that too,” the Earth Mother said with a laugh, “There are seven spirits put in place to aid Man’s development in his quest to find his Self. The first spirit is the creative force, me. It needs a purpose though for love needs direction but it also needs some understanding to uphold that purpose. I created the spirit of purpose through a set of natural laws and understanding to uphold them. They are the masculine and feminine forces, his basic instinct.”

“Right, I think I understand.”

“Good from these I created the elements. Understanding of purpose gives you life Dina and also wisdom Dryda. Love of purpose gives you insight or Dryga and understanding of love gives you knowing or you Dinu. When you can lose your hatred of man you will achieve your true potential.”

“So this hatred is actually holding me back I did not realise.”

“You do now that’s the main thing. You will meet a humble man today,” and with that a white horse appeared. Dinu got on its back and travelled back to his physical body and then woke to a new day. He had visitors due to arrive and was looking forward to the fresh news it would bring. (Dinu had moved from the original mountains further into Man’s world and into a much bigger mountain range. He had penetrated it much further than any Man had ever got before him and found amongst the snow an artificially heated valley. It was natural for it was a place of hot water springs it was only artificial in the fact that it did not seem to fit in with the rest of the environment. The Nethals that had survived still made contact with each other, the reason trade, but the real reason was they liked to converse and share new ideas)

At mid morning Cato and his party appeared and Dinu came face to face with Dryda.

“Is that wise,” he said to Cato, “A Man has no place in the world of the Nethals.”

“He is one of us,” Cato said, “He is a humble man.” At that Dinu remembered the dream and said to Dryda, “I was told of your coming although not of its purpose.”

“I was not aware that there was one.”

“One moment you will have to excuse me,” and went to talk to the Earth Mother, “Great Mistress, sustainer of life. You have sent me a humble man. Could you now tell me of the purpose?”

“So you might understand him for he is a kindred spirit. He is Dryda, your brother. He too is a totem.”

“Thank you Great Creator,” Dinu said and went back to Dryda, “You are welcome Dryda. I, too am a totem and it is destined that we meet.”

Trading done and ideas exchanged they got down to the main business, Man bashing. “See for all his power he is back where he started,” Cato said, “His trouble is that by adapting the environment to him he has lost his ability to adapt.”

“True, true,” Nethan said, “Yes, that was his downfall. He’s worse off now than he was a great cycle ago. If that’s evolution he will be a fish by the end of the next one,” and laughed in his Nethal like manner.

“It’s not him, it’s his pride that does it,” Dryda said, “It leaves him out of the Grand Design and without a real sense of purpose.”

“There speaks a humble man,” Dinu said, “It is but a shame they are all not like him.”

“The secrets they forced out of me should have made them that way,” Dryda said, “But I fear their free will was too strong.”

“Quite a curse really,” Cato said with a laugh, “They haven’t got the understanding to go with it so they quickly come unstuck.”

“And see how they treat their fellow men,” Nethan said, “Made slaves for great buildings that no one can live in. What’s that all about anyway? Why build dwellings that you cannot live in. It does not make sense.”

“Well we are hardly rational,” Dryda said with a laugh, “Our pride forbids it.”

“So what were they for? For the life of me I cannot work it out.”

“Ah. That was through me actually.”

“You?”

“Yes I’m afraid they misunderstood what I said.”

“Sorry, misunderstood?”

“I told them to glorify their Self but to see the big picture.”

“That’s a strange thing to say, was it said before you were humble?”

“No,” Dryda said with a laugh, “It was an answer to a question they compelled me by asking. Some of their questions had to be heard to be believed. This particular one was how must I live my life. I answered to the glory of their Self but in the big picture. In other words to the glory of the Earth Mother but I guess they did not understand.”

“And a lot of men have suffered for their ignorance,” Cato said, “They were nowhere near ready for the power that they had. It was like giving a child a sharpened stick.”

“I think they do that as well,” Nethan said, “I have heard stories that they train them young for war.”

“Yes,” Cato said, “Quite a preoccupation of theirs for a while. Now though they are just lucky if they get themselves enough to eat.”

“Serves them right,” Nethan said, “They have virtually destroyed us and now they have destroyed themselves. What goes around comes around, is that not the truth?”

The Nethals believed that Natural Justice came in two forms. One in your own lifetime (what you sow so shall you reap) on a personal level and if the crime is great enough one against your race (what goes around comes around). The only real difference is that the

first one was a personal crime and the second a crime committed by the clan with the person involved)

“Yes,” Cato said, “You can see it by their actions. Well tomorrow we must leave early so I’ll say my goodbye for awhile if you don’t mind,” and left the group. Soon they had all gone and Dinu found himself back in the Underworld. “A humble man,” the Earth Mother said, “And you’ve found a new brother. Not a bad days work I would say Dinu.”

“He seems humble enough so why the meeting?”

“I’ve got a job for you both but first you must merge.”

“What, I don’t like the sound of that.”

“It is a mergence of spirits that’s all, an exchange of knowledge if you like. Through it you’ll get wisdom and he will get knowing. Air and Earth will meet. From it you will both get stronger and you especially for within him lie Water and Fire.”

“How? Unless you are saying that Dina lives within him too.”

“Dina lives within all men that are humble and Dryga merged a long time ago.”

“So I will get this through conversation with him I did not realise.”

“It’s only transference of spiritual energy no more. It’s not like I’m asking you to kiss him.” (This was an evolution from that when the transference, the life force, was thought to be more physical and so had to be transferred through a kiss. It was not to happen for quite a while yet so the Earth Mother was a bit premature in mentioning it)

“And then for I am guessing it is for a purpose.”

“You will teach Man how to tell stories properly for his storytelling leaves much to be desired. It is quite a big job but Dryda will help you before he has to re enter the world of Man.”

“Really, does he know that?”

“Not yet one step at a time besides that is the easy bit. All it really involves is taking them the stories and reminding them of the few skills they once knew to get them started once more.”

“That sounds a lot worse than just coming up with a few stories is there something that I’m missing?”

“There have been a lot of changes since you last saw Man they have adapted well to their different environments and developed different characteristics. Your stories will have to represent these and explain it to them in a way they will understand. Each one will be different.”

“That sounds like quite a job. How will we know their true history for a start for isn't that the way to find out their nature.”

“You forget that you are the spirit of knowing I will just reveal my records to you so that is no great problem. Your main problem will be helping them to actually remember them for he is such a forgetful creature.”

“His stories have a blood lust if I remember. He seems to thrive on it.”

“Dryda will cover that side and make is more fanciful for he only seems interested in bears and wolves most of the time.”

“I’ll try my best but I don’t really think I would know how.”

“We need a new concept one that will capture his imagination so hopefully we can build on it.”

“We will need to resurrect his story telling ability too it has long lost its favour.”

(Story telling had fallen from favour in the last great cycle. It was an age when anything

was possible and nothing too fanciful so you could pretty much make your own entertainment. It had resurfaced later under the rise of the great civilisations but only as a means to glorify their wars so they lasted as long as the civilisation concerned)

“Dryda will help that along but the stories will have to be worth remembering.”

“True,” Dinu said and thought some more, “Dryda will know.”

“I will call him,” the Earth Mother said and with that Dryda appeared.” I did not know you could do that,” Dinu said, “I thought we could not cross worlds.”

“This is my world that you are in,” the Earth Mother said, “Anything is possible,” and to Dryda, “Dryda, if you was to compose a story that you wanted man to remember what would it be like?”

“Pretty violent I suppose,” Dryda said, “And one centred around pride so I would make sure that man would always win.”

“Yes,” the Earth Mother said, “And what about fanciful?”

“Demons,” Dryda said, “No wait a moment supermen. They still have him in their memory maybe use that in some way.”

“It could work,” the Earth Mother said, “I want you to write his history as a story.”

“Sounds pretty easy,” Dryda said.

“Good,” the Earth Mother said, “I also want you to make each history personal to each group so it will take quite a lot of imagination.”

“Quite a job,” Dinu said.

“And it’s not finished,” the Earth Mother said, “I want separate stories about how to climb the levels of understanding and the stories to hide my breath within them.”

“Sorry,” Dinu said, “I was up with you until then.”

“You will hide this knowledge through the names so if the stories get changed or forgotten there is more chance of it getting through,” the Earth Mother said, “Names seem to stick in the memory more. Each letter of the name will be symbolic of a word and so the name will be a phrase. Here is the master key,” and with that Man got symbols to write with, “Quite a job I have given you.”

“Should keep us busy,” Dinu said, “We’ll get it done as soon as we can.”

“Fair enough,” Dryda said and the conversation ended.

Meanwhile in a different part of Man’s world Clem and his brother Jon were in argument.

“I say that they have no right to hold us against our will here,” Clem said, “The forest is a big place there is more than enough for everyone.”

“I don’t dispute it but we are here now and there is nothing we can do about it.”

“We could fight them show them that we are not afraid.”

“What with, they have our weapons and even if they didn’t their weapons are a lot more superior to ours. We had no chance armed, what are our chances now?”

“We’d die free men.”

“Die being the operative word look just keep your head down and when we have done what they want of us they will let us go.”

“There is no point to it they are making us do it for no reason. Why build such things?”

“They must have a reason but for the life of me I don’t know what. Cal said that he overheard them saying it was to remind them of the flood but I can’t see it myself”

“I was going to say we don’t need a reminder of the flood our father talks about it every day.”

“No, we’ll never forget the flood and after we have gone what does it matter?”

“True watch out there is one of them coming.”

“Ask him he does not look as aggressive as the rest.”

“Excuse me sir would you mind telling me why we are doing this?”

“You dare to ask me a question,” the man said but thought better of it and changed his manner, “Well I suppose as you’re building it. It is symbolic of the glory of Self and so within it is hidden our history. It is also a reminder of what has gone before us to remind us of past greatness and mastery of design. We are a dying race and we know that but in times to come, who knows it might prove useful.”

“And this knowledge?” Jon said.

“Don’t ask that,” the man said, “That is not your place. Count yourself lucky that I have told you this much. Any more would be certain death.”

“Oh,” Jon said shrinking back.

“You will be safe as long as you are ignorant,” the man said, “And we will curse the temple before we leave so it will never give up its knowledge until Man is truly ready for it. They will not make our mistake.”

“Your mistake?” Clem said.

“Arrogance,” the man said, “But I have said enough, it does not do to mix so freely with such lowly company,” and walked off.

“Charming,” Jon said after he had gone

“I wonder what that knowledge is,” Clem said, “I want to know what makes them what they are.”

“You heard him; it’s going to be cursed. I don’t want anything to do with it, I have heard stories.”

“Stuff and nonsense the only thing I fear is their stinging spear. As soon as they’ve gone I’ll be straight in.”

“Don’t be foolish the demons will get you. If he forces them to protect that thing what chance have we got?”

“Demons don’t exist that was just a story our mother told us. We are not children now,” and the conversation ended. Time past and the great building work was done. The men who made the monuments left to make others and the tribe was left in peace. They all shunned the building because of the curse and the bad memories it brought them though they dared not destroy it in case the men should ever return. By then the monument’s stories were formulated and Dryda ready to travel so the binding of him to the building saved him a journey. It took Clem a full Moon to build up his courage and when he finally did Dryda had his first customer. Now although Dryda had been compelled to guard it he still had his free will for the spell was not strong enough to do both. He could work under his own direction and was not forced to answer anything. The story begins with Clem finding the hidden entrance into the complex. He was on his own as Jon had not been brave enough to accompany him and as he entered in he was having second thoughts. Nervously he crept down the thin stone staircase and entered the hidden vault underneath the great structure. It was then that he saw Dryda and froze in panic.

“Come in,” Dryda said, “Don’t stand on ceremony I won’t bite.”

Clem entered and nervously came towards Dryda, “I mean no harm, I was just looking that’s all. I did not realise that anybody would still be here.”

“They have all gone I am all that remains.”

“You are not a demon then,” Clem said with a sigh of relief, “I thought for a moment that

you were.”

“I am,” Dryda said and disappeared reappearing behind him, “But I am not here to hurt you. No, I am here to tell you a story and show you a few things that will help your life get better.”

“What, so you are not bad then. We were always told that you were.”

“Not me, well unless you see me on a bad day,” and laughed.

“So what exactly are you then if you don’t mind me asking that is for I would not want to upset you.”

“Now Clem we are humble not timid.”

“How did you know my name?”

“Because names are important and well worth remembering. Are you good at remembering names Clem?”

“Pretty, why do you ask?”

“I want you to remember some for me. These are important for they are the names of your ancestors. I will recite them until you know them off by heart and then I will tell you some stories that will tell you how you came to be. If you can remember them I will reward you with a few gifts how does that sound?”

“Good, what’s the catch then?”

“No catch. All this is freely given for you have earned it with all your hard toil. I don’t think that just sparing your life is a good reward so it shames me into this.”

“You mean that you are under their control, are they really that powerful?”

“Only until I impart all this knowledge another reason why it is given freely.”

“Then allow me to help you on your way,” Clem said and the knowledge was transferred.

## **Chapter 2**

As all this was happening the Earth Mother and Dinu were deep in conversation. “You mentioned your breath earlier,” Dinu said “What was that all about?”

“Through that knowledge I might live in Man it is my very breath.”

“Really, pretty important then.”

“Immeasurably. Man has now travelled enough that it might come to fruition.”

“A very long time indeed it was quite a journey.”

“It should not have took so long normally it should only take one great cycle but it just fell wrong that was all.”

“Fell wrong?”

“Yes, my purge at the start of their evolution, a Sun cycle, various natural phenomena all added time. Yes, quite a struggle.”

“And now they are ready?”

“Won’t be for a long time the elemental wheel still has a few turns to make but I want to make sure that it is in place and consigned to their folk memory. When they are ready for it they will understand.”

“Right,” Dinu said and with that Dryda appeared. “That’s the first one in place,” he said on arrival.

“Any trouble,” the Earth Mother said, “Did it go alright?”

“Yes,” Dryda said, “But they seem a lot slower than I remember them. I think he got it all in the end though.”

“Good,” the Earth Mother said, “You might find that most of them you meet are like that

I'm afraid they have been kept in ignorance for a very long time."

"They are just like children really," Dryda said and then to Dinu, "You ought to take the next one and see what I mean."

"Could I?" Dinu said to the Earth Mother, "I wouldn't mind. In fact I would quite like it."

"Sure," the Earth Mother said, "You can take the next one if you like then alternate it perhaps. We don't want to make hard work out of it. Are there any more of the stories ready?"

"Most of them," Dinu said, "Just a few left."

"Take it easy for a while then," the Earth Mother said, "Why not go travelling?" and with that the white horse appeared. It took Dinu back and Dinu woke up and a new day started. He met with Dryda and an excursion was discussed. They decided to visit the dragon because Dinu had never seen it and then go back to where Dinu was born and see how much it had changed

Situ turned the rabbit on the fire and cursed his misfortune. The first thing in three days and it was only a rabbit. He was on his own and left alone by the rest of the clan for they considered him slow and dim witted. He took the rabbit off and as he was eating it 2 figures came towards him from the under growth. He had not seen a Nethal before and as Dryda came from old man (from before the mixing of Nethal and man) he too looked unusual. Situ was filled with fear and debated on running away but Dinu said, "Fear not we mean you no harm in fact we are here to do you good."

"How is it you speak like that?" Situ said.

"That is my way. Why is it that you are alone, where is the rest of your clan?"

"They shun me, they say I am simple."

"And are you?"

"I must be for they say I am."

"Can you remember things," Dryda said, "If I told you things would you forget them?"

"No, I have a good memory."

"Then you cannot be simple," Dinu said, "A simple man does not remember things. Why do they say you are simple?"

"Because I think things differently than they do."

"In what way?"

"I see good when all they see is bad. They say that I don't know what life is about for if I did I would see things differently."

"You are humble," Dryda said upon realisation, "May we sit and talk to you awhile for there are not many of you around."

"Sure," Situ said still nervous as he made a place for them both. After they had made themselves comfortable he said, "You are not from around here are you?"

"I was," Dinu said, "But it was many cycles ago."

"Cycle, what's a cycle?"

"A cycle," Dinu said in surprise for he thought he would know that, "It is the time it takes to change the land."

"Sorry."

"See that plant," Dinu said and picked it out. He pulled off the large root and offered it to Situ who gingerly took it. After he had tasted it he said, "That is good. I did not realise that you could eat it. What has that to do with the changing of the land though?"

"The changing of the land is its growth, maturity and death," Dinu said, "The length of



time it takes is a cycle.

“And it was many, many of them since you were last here, you must be, what do you call it old?”

Dinu laughed at that and said, “I’m older than the hills that surround us. The flora has not changed much though so I could show you what you can eat if you like.”

“That would be good there is not much prey around here. We did taste the greenery before but it sent our king dead so we kept away from it.”

“Some are bad,” Dinu said, “I will show you these too so that it might not happen again,” and with that took Situ on a tour and increased the variety of his diet ten-fold. After all this had happened Dinu said, “You must go back and teach the clan all that I have told you so they too might know the bush. Then, if you like, you may return and we will teach you some more.”

“Fair enough, I will go tomorrow for it is a good day away.”

“Then on the next full Moon we will see you back here and continue our teaching,” Dinu said and the conversation moved on.

“Are you demons? If you don’t mind me asking for I fear to upset you.”

“What do you perceive demons to be,” Dinu said, “For they are perceived by different men in different ways.”

“Evil creatures that once took our ancestors as slaves. We have heard that they were cursed by the Earth Mother to roam the realms of darkness for all time.”

“No,” Dinu said, “We are not demons then. We are teachers, no more. So what else do your legends say? What about Creation?”

“We have always been there was no creation.”

“And kingship,” Dinu said, “How do you come to have kings?”

“They have always been from father to son that is how it is.”

“But how did they come to be in the first place,” Dinu said, “What created them?”

“There was no creation, they were not created they have always been.”

“They must have been created,” Dinu said, “All things have beginnings.”

“Do they, I did not realise.”

“We are kings,” Dinu said, “And with what we know you too could be a king.”

“I don’t think I would like that, not at all. They are bad brutal men. They take the best food and order us around. No, I don’t want to be like that.”

“No,” Dinu said, “We are true kings. We are different to what you call kings. Let me tell you of your history and then you will understand,” and went on to relate the names given to him by the Earth Mother. This had the effect of wising him up and honing his intellect so that he knew and understood things held in secret from him. When he left the following morning he was a changed man, mentally speaking and this caused quite a stir when he arrived back home.

“Back so soon,” Etol said “Could you not survive without us?”

“On the contrary it is I that have come back to help you to survive better,” and took a plant from the soil, “Try this you will be surprised.”

“No way, it would send me dead.”

“Your choice,” Situ said and started to eat it.

“Fool that will send you dead.”

“I am not dead,” Situ said after he had finished, “And neither am I hungry.”

Gingerly Etol tried one and much to his surprise liked the taste. “This is good,” he said

“How did you come to find it?”

“I was told.”

“Told, told by who?”

“Two strange men in the woods they showed me that and many more good things to eat.”

“Demons?”

“No, they said that they were true kings.”

“Cal will not like that it is his job alone to order us around.”

“They do not order you around that is not their way. They say that they are true kings and true kings do not do that.”

“Cal would not be pleased at all,” Etol said and indeed he was not.

“What,” he yelled angrily at Situ when he had told him, “A threat to my authority is it. We’ll see about that,” and called his champion forward and two of his best men, “Sega, I want you to hunt these two men down and bring them to me.”

“And if they won’t.”

“Kill them, need you ask.”

“I am just making sure,” Sega said with a smile before departing. After they had gone Cal turned to Situ and said, “And you said that they showed you things good to eat. Show them to me so at least they will not die in vain.” Situ obliged and the clan of Dani started to live a little better.

Dinu had sensed the warriors long before their arrival and had plenty of time to prepare for them. He and Dryda dug a hole deep enough that a man could not get out and big enough to fit a few of them in. Then he laid branches over it and threw leaves over the branches so that the hole was hidden. They even had time to set a trap of a different type. This was a rope one that was tied to the sprung branch of a tree. Dryda hid near the sprung branch ready to cut it when the time was right and then waited. As Sega and his party made their way to where Situ had camped one of them Gos said, “Why does Cal take on so? They have told us what is safe to eat, surely that means they are friendly after all what enemy would do that?”

“Well,” Doth said, “When we capture them we will have all of their secrets so it won’t really matter if they are friendly.”

“Wouldn’t we be better talking to them,” Gos said, “We see two now but how many are behind them?”

“That is the perfect reason to kill them then,” Sega said, “For the life of me I can’t see why Cal wants them alive. It is safer that they are killed and hidden so they cannot go back and tell the rest of our presence.”

“He wants their knowledge first,” Doth said, “And who could blame him. We starve because we have no meat when all around us is a food store.”

“It’s all poison,” Sega said, “We cannot eat it.”

“Etol has tried some,” Doth said, “He told me himself. He said that Situ had told him of many others.”

“Whoever listens to Situ,” Gos said, “He talks nothing but nonsense.”

Sega laughed and said, “Do you remember the time he said that animals could talk it was just that we couldn’t understand them. What a fool.”

“Yes,” Gos said, “And remember the...” With that the ground gave way and both he and Doth fell down the pit. Sega was slightly behind them and the shock made him step two paces back unknowing that there was a rope underneath him. Dryda cut the other rope

that had sprung the branch and the force of the recoil sent Sega off his feet and dangling upside down. He struggled but was helpless so quickly gave up.

“You came to try and kill us,” Dryda said, “And after we have been good enough to show you how to live. What sort of people are you?”

“We only meant to capture you,” Sega said, “We have not come to kill you.”

“We are not fools,” Dryda said, “You wanted to capture us to find out what we knew and then we would have been killed.”

“Ah,” Sega said for his game was up, “And now? You have us in your power so I guess it is us to be killed.”

“Not necessarily,” Dryda said, “We are not of your kind and so killing does not come easy to us. We will kill you if we perceive we have to, you may have no fear of that but it’s up to you.”

“To me?” Sega said.

“Are you a man of honour,” Dryda said, “Do you know what it means for a start?”

“I know honour,” Sega said, “And my word is my life.”

“Then promise us that you will not come after us again,” Dryda said, “Do that and we will let you go.”

“I can make that promise for myself,” Sega said, “And if I did I would keep it but I cannot promise for the clan for that is beyond my power.”

“I understand,” Dryda said, “Your promise should suffice,” and let him go after they had received it. Two more promises saw Doth and Gos released and the conversation began.

“So why would your king want us dead?” Dinu said.

“How is it you can speak without talking?” Gos said.

“It is my way,” Dinu said, “That is how I communicate, but that is not important. Why does your king want us dead?”

“He sees you as a threat to his power,” Sega said.

“Us,” Dinu said, “We shun his power. That is not the life of a true king. Why ever would he think that we want it?”

“So what actually is a true king,” Sega said, “What makes him different from Cal?”

“Humility makes a true king,” Dinu said, “He must be the least in the clan.”

“That must be Situ,” Gos said with a laugh.

“Situ is a true king,” Dinu said, “And animals can communicate,” and called out into the forest. Within minutes most of the local fauna had arrived. Dinu said, “I apologise for inconveniencing you but I must warn you to keep away from a large hole I have dug. It will be filled as soon as possible but in the meantime please take a care,” with that they filtered back into the undergrowth and Gos said, “That’s amazing. I never knew.”

“You were told,” Dinu said, “So you did know.”

“But it was Situ that told us,” Gos said, “We don’t put value on what he says.”

“It might be a good idea if you did,” Dinu said, “For with his guidance you will live a lot better.”

“You are eating better already,” Dryda said, “He knows many things.”

“Yes,” Gos said, “It is true that he has given us new things to eat, but a king?”

“A true king,” Dryda said, “We have many things that we can teach you but we will only consort with a true king.”

“Do you mean that you will only consort with Situ,” Sega said, “Well that’s a surprise.”

“We will teach you how to make those traps that caught you,” Dinu said, “As long as you

help us to fill in the hole. Anything else is only for the ears of a true king.”

“Fair enough,” Sega said, “Those traps look pretty useful,” and so the hole got filled and the clan of Dani relearned how to trap animals. You would have thought that Cal would have been happy but life does not work like that.

“What do you mean consort with a true king?” he roared, “I am a true king. I will kill Situ just to prove it.”

“Not advisable,” Sega said, “For then they would not tell us anything else. I think that we could learn a lot from these men.”

“They will talk to me, I am a true king.”

“They will not talk to you they have told me as much.”

“Then we will go and force it out of them and then we will kill them.”

“I cannot, I have made a promise to them.”

“What about your promise to the king, have you soon forgotten?”

“I have made a promise to a king though who it is I have not yet decided.”

“How can you say that after I have been so good to you? You get the second best cut of meat, who else has that honour?”

“It is indeed an honour; it is just a pity that under your leadership it is few and far between. These men have taken away our famine and we owe them a debt of honour. If it is Situ they want to deal with then Situ it will be.”

“They said a true king, I am a true king.”

“They will not talk to you.”

“I will go, it has been said.”

“Have it your own way,” Sega said and left.

All this had been picked up by Dinu, “The king himself has condescended to pay us a visit.”

“Will he be on his own?”

“I think so, Sega has upheld his promise. I will know for sure when he actually sets off.”

“Good and then we will be more than ready for him.”

Sega in the meantime had made his way to Situ “If I offered you the kingship would you accept it?”

“No, it is not true kingship.”

“If you were the king you could make it so.”

“Sega, you think that if you made me king then I would be pliable to your will. True kingship is not about that.”

“Then what is it, everyone talks about it but no one has defined it.”

“True kingship is when everyone is a king it is only kinship with a spiritual will.”

“What?”

“Brotherhood through the Earth Mother no one takes the best for it is all the best. We fight over scraps of meat when all around us is food. Without the Earth Mother we are truly ignorant.”

“Right,” Sega said backing away, “I’ll take that as a no then. But you will still go and see them again won’t you?”

“Sure, they make for good company.”

“They do seem interesting I must admit and intelligent too. Speaking of that, you seemed to have come back a changed man. A lot wiser.”

“Really, I was not aware of it.”

“Yes, a lot sharper.”

“Well I’ve told you all they told me, well apart from the history.”

“The history?”

“They gave me a list of names and said they were our ancestors. I did not mention it to Cal for I thought that he would not like it.”

“Oh, and this list do you still remember it?”

“Yes they told me that I must never forget it,” and related the names to Sega who got wise though never knew it.

“And do you think they are genuine? I mean I have heard none of Cal’s forefathers mentioned.”

“They said they were true and if the truth be known I would take their word over Cal’s.”

“My thoughts exactly.”

“So you could be king any one could.”

“I don’t think I would want it,” Sega said as the knowledge started to sink in, “No, you talk more sense, well what I understand of it. Perhaps you might teach me that list so that I might remember it,” and Situ duly obliged.

Time past and Cal’s journey came to an end. Knowing that he had come on his own Dinu and Dryda did not lay any traps but met him face to face.

“What do you want of us?” Dryda said.

“I have come for your knowledge,”

“Then you have wasted a journey for our knowledge is only for the ears of a king.”

“I am a king. I am more worthy of that knowledge than anyone and yet you insult me by giving it to simple Situ.”

“You are not a king; you don’t even know what a king is. You are both ignorant and arrogant for you call yourself a king without knowing what a king is.”

“I know what a true king is for I am one as was my father before me and his before him.”

“So what makes you a king then? Why should you think that you are so special?”

“I have told you I am a king because my father was before me. This has always been the way.”

“Well one of your ancestors must have done something to be called king. What do your legends say?”

“Legends, we don’t have them. They are for no purpose only storytelling.”

“How ignorant you are, to impart our knowledge to one such as you might not only be wasteful it might prove dangerous.”

While this was happening Etol and Situ were in conversation, “Sega was saying that you have a list of our ancestors that proves Cal is not the rightful king.”

“Well I don’t know about that but I have a list of our ancestors.”

“May I hear it?” Etol said so Situ recited it and then taught it him. Whilst all this was happening Sega taught both Gos and Doth and they in turn taught others. Cal on the other hand was not taught anything at all.

“If you can prove you are a true king we will give our knowledge to you,” Dryda said,

“And it will have to be a better reason that your father was before you.”

“King’s blood runs through me is that not enough?”

“Blood runs through everyone just as everyone can be king.”

“Then if anyone can be king I am one,” Cal said clutching at a straw, “So I am entitled to the knowledge for everyone is.”

“Anyone can be king it is just your pride that tells you differently. When you have got rid of your pride you will become a true king. Then and only then will we reveal all our knowledge to you.”

“But I am a king why should I have to prove myself to you. It is beneath me.”

“Then you are just wasting your time your pride is too strong for you. Come back when it’s gone. If you cannot lose it don’t come back at all.”

“Is that your final word?” Cal said and seeing it was stormed off.

“Do you think he will come back,” Dinu said, “He did not seem too pleased. I have heard about men and their tempers before.”

“You can never tell,” Dryda said, “He will go back and see if he has back up first.”

“He won’t find much luck there by the time he gets back he will find that they are all kings.”

“Really, how has that come to be?”

“It seems the names were more powerful than I thought, their magick has started working already.”

Cal was still angry when he called the clan together, “Brothers of the spear” he said trying to stir them to war, “It appears that there are enemies of ours in the forest. I move that we go out in full force and kill them.”

“Really,” Gos said, “And what gives you the right to make such a judgement?”

“I am a king that is my right.”

“Well I also am a king,” Gos said, “And I know that as a true king I cannot send my fellow man out to kill others.”

“What do you mean you are a true king?” Cal said with a mixture of surprise and anger, “Sega avenge me for this disrespect.”

“I too am a king,” Sega said, “It is not in a king’s heart to seek revenge for personal perceived injustice.”

“What is this, what is going on here, is this some sort of joke?”

“The joke is over,” Doth said, “And a cruel joke it was. We are all kings now. You have laughed at us for long enough.”

“What, what are you saying?”

“It’s over,” Doth said, “Your kingship is no longer viable.”

“But what of my bloodline?”

“Mention it again and I will spill it all over the floor,” Sega said, “You have kept us all in ignorance because you were ignorant yourself. That is the only reason you are still alive now. If we thought you were more than just an ignorant fool and kept us this way for your personal gain I can quite assure you, you would be dead.”

“So who is to be king now,” Cal said with contempt, “Situ.”

“Are you stupid?” Sega said, “Which part of we are all kings don’t you understand?”

“But you must need a leader; someone has got to take the main decisions.”

“We will ask our guidance of the Earth Mother and we will also ask those 2 men if they would come and live amongst us for a while. They will show us the way.”

“Then what is to happen to me?”

“Maybe we ought to make you live on your own after all you did that to Situ and from what I see you are a lot more foolish than him.”

“Yes” Gos said “Without him we would have always been ignorant. And to think we could have lost all of this because of your stupidity.”

“I say that Situ must decide on his fate,” Sega said, “For he has already been judged by Cal. What say you Situ?”

“Well the only thing stopping him being a true king is his pride,” Situ said, “So maybe he should learn humility,” and Cal was made to fetch and carry for two cycles to atone for his actions. Dinu and Dryda moved in with the clan and stopped awhile to teach them things so that they might grow in awareness. By the time they had done the clan had learned agriculture, domesticated animals and made buildings out of clay bricks.

### **Chapter 3**

Dryda and Dinu were not finished after they had left Situ. They moved back up north and then carried on formulating the stories. Time after time they were compelled to the temples and one by one the information was imparted. There were still tribes to visit for some lived in areas too inhospitable to provide a sustainable workforce and so these had to be reached by foot. After it was all finished Dryda said his goodbyes and moved further north through Siberia and crossed the ice free corridor into America and Dinu never saw him in the physical again

Not long after Dryda had left the Earth Mother called Dinu unto her service once more, “Good job Dinu you have reason to be pleased with yourself.”

“Quite a task, it was enjoyable I must admit but I am glad it is now over.”

“It was a bit hectic for awhile but between you and Dryda you coped admirably.”

“So why was it so hectic if you don’t mind me asking? I’m not complaining don’t get me wrong I’m just enquiring.”

“You are welcome to ask anything of me nothing is hidden from you. It needed to be done to kick start Man that’s all. We left him the stories so hopefully he will be better prepared for the next one.”

“The next one?”

“Yes and quite a big one. A purge and Sun cycle. It could be the complete end of Man if we are not careful.”

“And when are these to happen?”

“12,000 years or so, it might sound a long time but Man, as he was, would have been nowhere near ready. It’s that stupid pride of his.”

“So we gave him the knowledge to get started again and it had to be quick because of the situation he was in.”

“Well is in, the stories are a lot more than that though. They are gateways to enlightenment. Understanding them will give him eternal youth so when the Sun cycle sends him sterile he may live on.”

“Oh, so it is his turn then and he also has one of your purges to cope with as well. No, I wouldn’t like to be him.”

“He may pull through, if he can get rid of his pride that is and if not, well it’s his free will at the end of the day.”

“You don’t seem too bothered I hope I am not out of turn saying that.”

“Oh it hurts but there is nothing I can really do about it. He’s big enough now to make his own decisions.”

“True so is there anything I can do for you whilst I’m here?”

“Very perceptive I have called you for a reason. I am in need of your service once more.”

“Anything you require,” Dinu said and with that hoc appeared.

“Hoc will help you,” the Earth Mother said and with that disappeared.

“Dinu got a little job for us, one that is right up your path.”

“Really, I’m intrigued.”

“All the stories are in place so hopefully Man might grow but it appears he has taken some of his knowledge from before into his next stage of development. Now we are to close him down as he has served his purpose.”

“Served his purpose?”

“Yes to create temples so you would not have to walk too far.”

“You mean that he did it for us,” Dinu said in surprise.

“Not consciously don’t you worry about that,” hoc said with a laugh, “No he did it for his own personal glory little realising that he was doing it for the greater good.”

“Oh, I was going to say.”

“Well a lot of that knowledge he has could be damaging to both us and Man in general so the Earth Mother thinks it is a good idea to relieve him of it.”

“Yes I can see the logic,” Dinu said with a smile.

“I thought you might like it, now a lot of it has gone underground so it is more of a damage limitation exercise.”

“Gone underground? Do you mean in the vaults under the monuments?”

“No generally they have kept the knowledge to a select few but some of it has escaped into the population and therefore might be lost to us for good.”

“Right, so it will be the elite we are going for then?”

“For the moment, in time if anything else does come up we will deal with it as we find it.”

“Fair enough so what are the plans?”

“Time has detracted from their power somewhat. They do not have the same power to compel you as they used to. They can summon you still but now you have a lot more control so you will have pretty much your own free will.”

“Really and what of our boundaries, how far can we go.”

“We’ll leave that to your discretion but if you can justify it for the greater good it is acceptable.”

“I won’t argue with that.”

“The only thing I ask is to let me go first it has affected me a lot longer than it has you.”

“Sure then you can let me know what goes on so I might know what to expect.”

Meanwhile in another dimension, Earth, the final remnants of the Silu people were gathered together in unity with hopes of regaining their power. Their leader Protector Silus was in the chair. “Brothers of the Silu,” he said, “Our remembrance is complete. Long will our memory live on, we can be proud of ourselves. Our job is done now but it doesn’t mean that we are. I have noted the ease in which we compelled the savage to our will and I say that maybe we are still powerful. We might not be as strong as we were before but we are still strong enough to make our mark.”

“That sounds like you have something in mind?” Detu said.

“Yes,” Silus said, “I have been giving the matter some thought and have decided that as we are more than men we deserve our own city. I say we should enlist the aid of the savage for this and keep him to work for us so we need never toil to satisfy our hunger.”

“The idea is admirable,” Cano said, “But I fear that they are too many and we could not contain them if they were to rise up against us.”



“Normally I would agree,” Silus said, “But the great flood, although it has virtually done for us, has done for them. They now have no lines of communication and are just scattered tribes. See how easy they fell to us.”

“I see your point,” Cano said, “But time will alter that and they will renew their links eventually. What then?”

“Then we will be ready for them,” Silus said, “For we too would be stronger.”

“We are but one clan,” Cano said, “We have not the back up of our brothers in arms now. They are all dead and gone. We may get stronger but it will never be enough for they are countless.”

“As long as the city is safe that is all that matters,” Detu said, “Good fortifications would serve us well.”

“Maybe,” Silus said, “But demons would serve us better.”

“Sorry?” Cano said.

“They are protecting our monuments,” Silus said, “They can do the same for our city. It is not such a big step.”

“We are going to need them to locate the savages anyway,” Cano said, “Yes Silus you are truly a wise man.”

“Then I will go and summon one and tell him of our plan,” Silus said and went to a small cave that was dedicated for that purpose. He chanted the chant of invocation and hoc appeared. “I have work for you,” Silus said as an order thinking that hoc was subject to his will, “I want you to locate the nearest clan and tell me of its strength.”

“The nearest clan is here and its strength is 50 but that is soon to drop.”

“What,” Silus said in confusion and hoc stepped in and took him over. (The clan knew about protective shields but as their power had been stronger they did not need them) Hoc went back to the clan and said, “It is done.” He picked up a spear and jabbed it into the nearest clan member’s stomach. The unexpectedness of the incident meant he got another 3 before Silus was killed and he was back with Dinu.

Back with the clan though confusion was all the rage “What was that all about,” Cano said and looking at the bodies, “What came over him?”

“Madness has always run through his family’s veins,” Dot said, “They say that his father could turn like the weather.”

“But there was no reason for it,” Cano said and looked at Silus’s dead body, “And we are now in need of a leader.”

“That is Deno’s job,” Dot said, “He is next in line,” and they all looked at Deno.

“Whatever happened is now done,” Deno said, “But we are in need of a city for the caves have served their purpose. I say that although Silus was mad his plan certainly wasn’t. I will go and carry on where he left off,” and went to the small cave and chanted the chant. Dinu appeared.

“Where is the nearest clan and what is its strength?” Deno said as if Dinu was a machine

“You have been told already. What, are you stupid?”

“Excuse me?” Deno said in shock.

“Am I going too fast for you? Would you like me..to..speak..slower?”

“What is this?” Deno said backing off. Dinu saw this and disappeared, reappearing behind him, “Do you think that I have time to waste pandering to your pride?” Dinu said, “You think that I can come back again and again to answer the same question. You may only ask a question once I am afraid,” and stepped inside him. Dinu went back to the

gathered clan and said “It is done,” and the carnage began once more. He only managed to get 2 before he was back laughing with hoc.

“Am I going too fast for you,” hoc said still laughing, “Where ever did you get that from?”

“You should have seen his face shock was not the word for it.”

“But I did it was on Silus,” after they had finished laughing Dinu said, “I can’t see it working again though.”

“No, we will have to bring Cri in for the rest of them.”

“Cri?”

“She’s the universal law upholder, creation regulates itself. She was created, under her five aspects to up hold balance.”

“Oh, I never knew.”

“You did, well 2 of her aspects anyway. Rwys, reap what you sow and Gaca goes around comes around.”

“So they are a personification of these laws, you mentioned 5?”

“Yes the others are Aeil, all equal in love. Gtr, give to receive and finally Hnmtyn or have no more than you need.”

“And we can visit her? What world does she live in?”

“She does not live in the worlds of creation; she lives in the words of your stories.”

“What?”

“It’s true the creative force made it so. She said ‘creating myth carrying laws’ and put the letters in her cauldron.”

“Amazing so how do we get to meet her?”

“Follow me,” hoc said and they both disappeared.

Meanwhile at the clan Silu things were in a panic. “There is something strange going on,” Cano said, “Madness never strikes twice.”

“There must be something in that cave sending them that way,” Detu said, “For it happened when they both came from it.”(The clan did not perceive the demons as entities for under their compulsion the demons were much akin to zombies another reason for not using protection)

Four of them went to check the cave and finding nothing suspicious came back and told Detu, their new leader. For the life of him he could not find an answer and this unnerved him more than slightly. “This place must be cursed,” he said, “That is the only thing I can think of.”

“By who?” Cano said.

“I couldn’t say,” Detu said, “But that is the only thing it could be. Maybe it was by one of our predecessors' I don’t know. I do know one thing though, we are not safe here. The sooner our city is built and we are away from this place the better.”

“Yes,” Cano said, “And may I suggest we move to another place away from the curse in the meantime.”

“Good idea Cano,” Detu said, “We’ll do that first for safety sake and then we’ll plan our city.”

While all this was happening hoc and Dinu were in conversation with Cri and her five daughters. “Great Cri,” hoc said, “We have need of you advice.”

“I know of your need,” Cri said, “And I see the dilemma that you are in. The knowledge that these men possess could indeed do untold damage but I am afraid there is little I can

do about it. I cannot react until they act I'm afraid so I cannot really see how I can help you."

"You could grant us immunity."

"That I cannot. I can give you my blessing so you may act for me but even then it can only be as a reaction and not as an action. Your deeds so far I have waved for I have put them down to reaction."

"Thank you great Cri," hoc said slightly disappointed.

"Things are not that bad, they will soon come unstuck and then I too can do my work."

"Hopefully and the sooner the better for the Earth Mother fears for the danger of their fellow men."

"I too but until it is done there is nothing I can do."

"Thanks again," hoc said and both he and Dinu returned back to the world of Earth.

"Well that's going to make it more difficult," Dinu said on their return, "Well at least we have her blessing."

"We already had it, we haven't really gained anything. We cannot go after them for then we are actions. That was what I wanted immunity from."

"Oh," Dinu said, "And they would not be that stu." with that hoc disappeared and was back again, "Six including their leader," he said on his return, "Surely now they will realise what's going on?"

Back on Earth (matter) the clan was wising up. Their new leader Krol had the floor, "It is not the place that is cursed unless this one is too. No, I say it must be the demons."

"They are harmless no minds," Cato said, "They were created by the Earth Mother to do our bidding. It is not in their requirement to think as they do not need to."

"Then we have transgressed the Earth Mother," Krol said, "She must be angry with us for some reason."

"Yes," Dav said, "She must have reformed the demons."

"So what could we have done?" Krol said and went deep in thought. After awhile he said, "It's no good. I cannot think of anything."

"The only real way of doing it would be to ask the demon," Dav said.

"Be my guest," Krol said, "I would not like to risk it."

"Me neither," Dav said, "If they have been reformed who knows what they would be capable of."

"There might be a way," Cato said, "Does not our legends say that we can confine them?"

"I have heard so now that you mention it," Krol said and remembered back, "Right," he said and the cave was suitably adapted. Four of them were there as Dinu was summoned. He tried to move but was forced on the spot.

"How have we displeased the Earth Mother?" Krol said,

"You have served your purpose," Dinu found himself saying.

"And what is to happen to us," Krol said picking his questions.

"You are to be eradicated," Dinu found himself saying.

"Is there anything we can do that might change that?" Krol said.

"You must sacrifice your Self to the Earth Mother," Dinu said and disappeared.

"Well now we know," Krol said, "What are our options for I am not one to take away my own life."

"If its blood they're after we have no choice," Cato said, "Is that it then. We make her

monuments and then she gets rid of us. Killed us when our job is over we would not even be that cruel to our slaves.”

“That’s it,” Krol said, “If a sacrifice is needed then one shall be given. Let us sacrifice a slave each in our place and she will be none the wiser. To her it is just blood, by the time it has soaked through the ground she will not know whose it is.”

“Good idea,” Cato said and 36 people lost their lives. Dinu and hoc were called in for the reaction and they started off in earnest. Dinu materialised in a forest close to the caves and in sight of a bear. “Great bear,” he said, “How is it that you hunger when food lies close by?”

The bear was surprised and said, “I can understand what you say. Our legends talk of this, you must be a Dina.”

“Dina,” Dinu said in surprise, “That was my brother’s name. What do your legends say?”

“Only that he was killed by one of our forefathers accidentally,” the bear said, “It was a show of strength no more”

“So what happened?” Dinu said and the bear went on to relate it. After he had finished the bear said, “I am sorry that it was your brother.”

“No matter, it was an accident, no more,” Dinu said, “So what of this food, are you not hungry?”

“I have not eaten in days,” the bear said, “But I don’t know of any food for if I did you can guarantee it would have been eaten by now.”

“A pack of men have moved nearby, no match for you, surely?”

“Normally no but they have things to help them. Without these things they are nothing but as I say they have things.”

“I could bring them to you and make sure they have no weapons that would make it fair.”

“There are too many of them I take one and they will all come after me. I do not mess in my woods.” (Evolved over time to mess my own doorstep or bring trouble to the house)

“There are 36 of them how many more are like you in the woods?”

“I’m not sure, I lead a solitary life. I do not like my fellow bear.”

“But it’s a case of mutual interest. Just think of it as a shared food experience. I could call them and explain it to them if you like.”

“Well if it’s in a mutual interest and I would like to know what man tastes like.”

Dinu called around him and soon there were seven more hungry bears. He bid them wait and went to the cave complex to find his first victim. It was Cato; he stepped inside him and took control of all his senses. Hiding his spear he took him into the woods and stepped out of him in front of the hungry expectant bears. Within seconds two were on him and he was quickly devoured.

“Patience,” Dinu said, “There is more than enough to go around. His legends say that he is stronger in combat than you even without his weapons. What do you say to that?”

“That is a lie he is no match for us without his things.”

“Well your legends say that my brother lost his life in a test of strength. I know that it was an accident so I am not here to blame. No, I say to uphold the balance you must all take a test of strength.”

“Then it must be so,” one of the bears said, “The question is who goes first.”

“It is their pride being tested not yours, whoever is the hungriest but be patient for they will quickly come,” and with that went for another victim. Each bear was tested and not one really challenged and so the bears knew that man without his things was

contemptible and lowly and deserving no respect. After it was over Dinu said, “Who’s for afters?” and they started all over again.

While all this was happening hoc was at work in the caves themselves, three suicides to his credit and a fourth in progress.

“No one can make your sacrifice,” hoc said inside Neto’s head, “The sacrifice is your own.”

“What are you doing in my head,” Neto said, “Who are you?”

“Neither of those questions are going to help you out of your predicament and make no mistake you are in a predicament.”

“I am?”

“You have sacrificed in vain for that was not the right kind of sacrifice it was one of service, no more. Now though you have killed a brother. You now come under Natural Justice and it has been deemed that as you have killed you too will be killed. You are to take your own life in recompense.”

“No, never”

“You have no choice in the matter your death has been noted already it is just that we’ll use other means if you don’t.”

“Then it will be done through other means.”

“And then what fool, you think that it will be over with your death, wrong, that will just be the beginning.”

“What, that cannot be.”

“You think that when you die that’s it. I’m afraid you have rather misjudged the situation. Where do you think that I come from and what about those demons that you summon to you? Believe me there is a lot more going on then you realise.”

“What must I do it seems I have little choice.”

“You must take your own life.”

“And if I do will you go easy on me?”

“You have saved us the trouble so that will be taken into account. You will probably just be reformed and put back on the wheel.”

“Do I have your word on that?”

“No, for I am only guessing it is not my jurisdiction so I cannot say for sure.”

“But you think so,” Neto said clutching at straws.

“Sure,” hoc said and with that another one lost his life. “Another one for perdition,” hoc said and went looking off for new meat. (Perdition is spiritual ruin and anyone who commits suicide will find themselves there. The act of suicide is considered the worst act imaginable for it is an act of free will that deprives the Soul of its growth. This is considered so bad that anyone who manages it deprives themselves from re entering the cosmic wheel so basically they are cursed for eternity)

Now as all this was happening it did not go unnoticed by Krol. “Where is everyone going to?” he said to Jano, “I keep seeing them entering the woods.”

“I don’t know, there must be quite a few out there as there are not many in camp.”

With that they were interrupted by Caher. “I have found Neto’s body,” he said, “He lies with a spear in his stomach.”

“We have a traitor,” Krol said, “Search the camp,” and with that the camp was searched. They found 3 more dead bodies, each killed the same way.

“Gather the clan,” Krol said, “We will get to the bottom of this. Jano, Kepps go into the

forest and bring them all back,” and with that they went to their deaths. Krol told the gathered clan he suspected that a rival clan was at work.

“No,” Caher said, “He was killed by his own spear.”

“And the others too,” Sela said, “They went the same way.”

“There’s something strange going on,” Krol said and then angrily, “Where had Jano and Kepps gone to? Caher go and see.”

“No way,” Caher said, “I am not going out there.”

“Are you disobeying me,” Krol said angrily.

“Too right,” Caher said, “Many have left but none have come back. What sort of idiot would I be to go out there?”

“I am the leader you will do as I tell you.”

“There are 13 of us left and if I go out there that would make it 12, not much of a following. Beside if you are the leader lead by example. Why don’t you go out there?”

“Yes,” Sela said, “I’m with Caher,” and each one of the clan agreed. Krol seeing he had no choice said, “As a leader must I do everything,” and he too went to his death. The clan stuck close together after Krol did not return so making it harder to get to them. No one left another’s sight but still the odd slip up occurred. By night time they were down to 9 and then things really picked up a pace. Hoc and Dinu got them in their dreams and the nightmares began. The worst things they could imagine came to life and not one of them slept silently or for long. The morning saw them tired restless and scared. They dared not leave the caves for fear of the forest and yet they knew there was something inside the cave. They had reasoned that the others must have been driven to suicide and something must have driven them. Also with each having different nightmares they reasoned that whatever it was must be pretty powerful. They were stuck between a rock and a hard place and did not know where to turn.

“We need a leader,” Sela said, “We will do no good otherwise.”

“You are welcome to the job,” Caher said, “Forever long it will last you.”

“Then I will take it,” Sela said, “But only because it must be done.”

“Very well,” Caher said, “We will go with your decisions but never ask us to do anything you would not do yourself.”

“Fair enough,” Sela said and looking around the others, “Is that acceptable?”

There was no sign of protest so he said, “It appears we have a foe far superior to us.”

“Yes,” Caher said impatiently.

“I do not think it is of this world,” Sela continued unperturbed, “So we will have to go to another.”

”What?” Caher said.

“We’ll summon a demon,” Sela said, “And then compel it to tell us what it is and how we can defeat it.”

“Good,” Caher said “I like it.”

#### **Chapter 4**

It was hoc’s turn to be summoned but he was of sterner spirit. He still kept his free will, which surprised them immensely when they found out but as he was confined to the spot they had no fear of him.

“What is happening here?” Sela said.

“You are all going to die,” hoc said in a zombie like manner.

“It there anyway to protect us?” Sela said.  
“Protect you,” hoc said with a laugh, “I am the one that is doing it.”  
“What, you have a mind?”  
“That’s right I have a mind,” while this was happening Dinu occupied Caher and removed all the weapons that they had stacked by the entrance.  
“And you are to kill us,” Sela said, “Why?”  
“You are dangerous you are not to be trusted with power.”  
“And if we relinquish it would you spare us then?”  
“You cannot relinquish it it is only quelled by your death.”  
“And you, can you be defeated?”  
“You have long run out of questions that at one time you might have compelled me to answer. Do you think I would tell you if there were,” and disappeared.  
“The weapons have gone,” Caher said little realising that he had took them.  
“They would have been no use,” Sela said, “That thing is not of our world.”  
“What are our options then,” Caher said, “We daren’t flee into the woods, especially now we are unarmed and we daren’t stay here either.”  
“Then we have no options,” Sela said.  
“This is no good,” Deln said, “I would rather take my chances in the woods. Is there anyone with me?”  
“I am,” Hin said, “That is the only real option. That demons power cannot stretch too far out surely. I say we run like tomorrow and take our chances that way.”  
No one else agreed with them so they took off on their own. The clan was down to seven now but the bears then lost their appetite. They had ate like they had never ate before and this made them tired enough to sleep. They had done enough though so Dinu and hoc were not too bothered. They only had seven more to deal with so most of it was done. Dinu entered into Caher once more and said, “This curse has been brought about because you are not king.”  
“Who are you?”  
“A friend.”  
“How do I know that?” Caher said guardedly.  
“You would have been dead by now if I wasn’t.”  
“Ah,” Caher said nervously.  
“Then it is lucky I am a friend wouldn’t you say?”  
“So what must I do to lift this curse?”  
“You must kill Sela and anyone that tries to stop you.”  
“I have no weapons and they are many.”  
“Why do you think you have no weapons, it is because I have helped you by hiding them. Outside to the left of the entrance in the under growth you will find a spear I have hidden for you. You must take it and claim your rightful place by killing Sela.”  
“It shall be done,” Caher said and fetched the spear. As he came back he was seen by Lug who said, “Where ever did you find that?”  
“No matter. Where’s Sela?”  
“At the far side why do you ask?”  
“For I mean to kill him.”  
“You can’t do that,” Lug said and blocked his way, “I don’t know why you want to kill him but we need every man that..” Lug lay dead on the floor and Caher continued his

journey. His arrival with the spear brought a glimmer of hope to the rest of the clan but not for long.

“You have brought a curse upon us,” Caher said to Sela, “You have denied me of my rightful place as leader.”

“You are welcome to it,” Sela said nervously, “I will gladly stand down.”

“It does not work like that I have to kill you to claim my prize.”

“What,” Simul said and quickly fell. The final 4 men circled him but another one had to fall before they could make their move. They wrestled him to the ground where he struggled foaming at the mouth like a madman. He could only be appeased by death and so it duly came. Sela pulled out the spear afterwards and said, “We cannot stay here nor can we leave, we only have one real option suicide.”

“Take our own life,” Conu said, “I don’t know about that.”

“It is the only way we can beat them at least then we have control over our own death.”

“I see no other way,” Tima said, “But I fear I lack the courage.”

“I will do it for you before I kill myself.”

“Fair enough,” Tima said, “What of you Conu?”

“No choice I guess,” Conu said and Sela slew them both before turning the spear on himself.

Back in the world of Earth (mind) hoc and Dinu were with the Earth Mother. “How did it go?” she said without greeting.

“Ten for perdition,” hoc said, “I fear that the other forty might come back and haunt us.”

“They will all fall to suicide in the end. You have done well to keep them out of circulation for a while anyway. That should be a great help to Man for awhile. We did not want them to get in the way of his new start.”

“So what now?” Dinu said, “I’m getting quite a taste for this sort of thing.”

“Well hopefully nothing like that will ever happen again it’s not really a track I want to travel too often.”

“I suppose not,” Dinu said duly chastened, “I was just wondering if you had need of me for anything else that was all.”

“Not for awhile now Dinu, have a little break; why not go out on a travel?”

“Thanks,” Dinu said, “But since Dryda left I have no one to go with.”

“Take hoc if you like well that’s if he’s agreeable.”

“Sure,” hoc said, “Yes it might make for a pleasant change.” So it was agreed and they arranged to travel to see how Situ’s clan was progressing.

They called on the dragon en route to pay their respects and soon met up with Situ again. It was a happy place and even Cal was a true king now.

“Welcome back Dinu,” Situ said, “And welcome to your friend.”

“Thank you Situ this is hoc, a fellow traveller through life.”

“Very happy to know you and Dryda how is he?”

“Very well he sends his apologies but he is elsewhere.”

“Fair enough he too is welcome any time. You have bought a lot of good to the clan and will never be forgotten.”

“And how do you prosper are things going well?”

“Indeed yes the Earth Mother has sent most of the clan out to teach other clans.”

“Good and is it going well?”

“They like our innovations but our words fall on death ears.”



“One step at a time, in time that might change but I would say that at the moment they are more concerned with hunger.”

“Wise words and well spoken but come and talk to us all as we are in need of good company,” and they entered a small clay brick hall that had been set aside for meetings and story-telling. The clan that was still around all gathered and Situ said, “We welcome you to our place and bid that you both tell us a story for that is now one of our customs.”

“Very well,” Dinu said and looking at hoc, “Would you like to go first?”

“Sure,” hoc said and began, “A long time ago when all the animals could talk with each other there lived a man called Atos. Now Atos was a clever hunter, strong and agile he was the finest in the clan. He could throw the spear the furthest, aim his arrows the straightest and run faster than any man. He was an elder for in those days it was like your clan, everyone was a king. Now although Atos was humble he had a good sense of self worth and was happy in knowing he was the fastest man alive. This happiness sometimes got too strong though and occasionally manifested itself as pride. It happened one day that he was out for a run and was overtaken by a deer that left him for dust. He ran as fast as he could to try and catch up but it was no good and so he returned home humble and humiliated. He vowed that he would beat the deer and reasoned that it was quicker because he was carrying too much weight and so he decided that he would not eat anything to make amends for this. Day after day he went without food and thinner and thinner he got. The rest of the clan saw this and tried to entice him to eat but he would not listen. In desperation they turned to the Earth Mother but she could not do anything for his mind was firm set. She turned to the Masters of Wisdom in the end and in pure desperation they turned him into a cat and made him faster than the deer. He could now catch the deer and so was happy. Contented enough he started eating again.”

“Is that true?” Dinu said after he had finished.

“That is what I was told,” hoc said, “By the Earth Mother herself.”

“It is a good story,” Situ said, “And you told it well. But it is different to our stories, ours have something to say.”

”But that one has you just have to look a little deeper.”

“Then I apologise for my ignorance and I mean no offence but I cannot see it for the life of me.”

“That man was good at everything that is how it should be for it makes him multi skilled. He was not happy though for he wanted to be master of one of them. He wanted to be specialist in one but to do that he had to forsake all his other skills. He lost his adaptability because of his pride. The story is saying be happy with what you have and don’t seek any more than you need on one level but it’s also saying don’t rely too much on one skill when you have many.”

“Yes I see my apologies once again.”

“Yes very good,” Dinu said, “My turn then” and composed himself in readiness. “The story I am about to tell you concerns our forefather Nethal and the time he came across the red monster. It was in a forest that he saw him breathing on insects and animals that crossed his path and turning them red. He asked the monster what it was doing and it told him that it was marking them out with poison for their own protection. Nethal thanked him and from that moment on anything that was red in colour was avoided for fear of poison.”

“Yes,” Situ said, “Unusual but very good.”

“And now your turn,” Dinu said, “For I would like to see how you progress.”

Situ told his story and then the rest of the clan followed suit. They had not quite grasped the art yet but they were remarkably close. Dinu vowed to himself that he would keep visiting them to see how they progressed and he and Hoc left the next day and journeyed back to where his home was. Hoc was quickly called away and Dinu had time on his hands. The days turned to years and then he went back to Situ to see how he was getting on and much to his surprise they had mastered it. Their news was not all good though.

“Dinu,” Situ said, “Are we glad you came. We have need of your wisdom.”

“It I can be of help what is it?”

“We have trouble from another clan they want to make us their slaves so we will toil the Earth for them. We are not scared of them for all you have told us has took away our fear away but we don’t know about killing. It makes us uncomfortable for we do not know where we stand on it.”

“And the Earth Mother what does she say about it all?”

“She said it is our choice and up to our discretion is this a test of some kind?”

“Not to my knowledge but I am not party to her every thought so I am not much good I’m afraid.”

“But what do you think? I will bow down to your judgement on this.”

“You would be defending yourself that would be in your favour I guess. I know how brutal some men are for I have found out to my cost. You have every right to defend yourself I would say. It would just be like coming up against a bear.”

“So you say we fight them that is your judgement?”

“Yes, no, something in my stomach finds distaste in killing. No, I would not like to say. It is a matter for individual conscious.”

“That’s as far as we can get and then we start again.”

“I will tell you what, where I live is far from other men. Anyone of you that has a distaste for killing may come and live with me. One thing though who ever knows of this place I show you must never tell anyone outside the clan.”

“Yes that sounds fair. We will not lose contact will we?”

“No, that channel will always be open. Some of you might change your mind later plus it will make a good escape route.”

“Good thinking,” Situ said and put the matter to the vote. It was roughly fifty, fifty so half of them including Situ, left with Dinu the following morning. The remnants of the clan were destroyed not long after. They fought hard and long but the enemy was far too strong. The only consolation was that none of them were taken into slavery for they all died in battle. Though that might sound strange with their understanding it was logical and clear. Situ and the rest settled well in the valley and Dinu had good company for a while. He was still called away now and again when the situations arose but it was not often, neither was it strenuous. The clan of Situ moved away to be closer to man though still visited him for they never lost their friendship. They have never revealed his whereabouts to anyone outside the clan and so Dinu lives in relative safety even till today.

# Man-The Final Years

## 1. The Ashipu's Tale

The elemental wheel has gone a full turn since the floods and creation of the mythologies and man has advanced to a fairly advanced society. Evolution was not the same everywhere though and inequality both technically and intellectually was still rampant. Nomadic hordes still roamed the land though some men had taken to farming and towns and large cities developed. Man had grown a lot more in population and so some of these nomadic hordes were very large in number and could only really sustain themselves by raiding. It was a barbaric place to some yet to others it could be quite refined. Their laws had even evolved to weights and measures and woe betide any ale wife that gave short measure when it came to her beer for a nasty fine was in order. The story that I am now to relate starts in a pub so you will have to excuse that last comment. It is set in Eridu in southern Mesopotamia at the time urban literacy was coming into being and revolves around an Ashipu and his constant battle to get the better of a farmer that also used to frequent the pub.

Canon was a proud man, well thought of in his field although he was not a farmer he was an Ashipu, a cross between a faith healer and a star gazer. He had a profound respect for the Gods and he lived his life according to their perceived view. (The people in some places had turned the list of names into a new term that had come into being 'Gods'. Before the mono theistic idea had come into fashion they had taken two forms. Superhuman beings with super natural powers derived from the stories left to them and personification of natural phenomenon. They kept their worship of the Sun, Moon and Earth but it had evolved to a myriad of other things and so lost a lot of its power though dilution. Over time some of the names were even changed to honour a local king (leader of men into battle) who had made a lasting impression with the people causing loss to the message's potency) Canus on the other hand was of the old breed. A humble man he too was outstanding in his field and as he was a farmer it was for fairly long periods of time. As a humble man he was blessed with common sense and a stress less state of mind brought about by his oneness with the land. His Gods were the seasons and weather but only in the sense that they had some control over him and he had to work around them. He did not idolise them but understood them. The Earth Mother though she was held in high regard and her fertility his main concern. He had irrigated land to water her and she in turn had proved grateful rewarding him her finest bounty, she would bring forth life and a bumper harvest of it. They had an understanding and although he would not sacrifice his wares to her honour that was not out of disrespect for her. No, he perceived that she would consider it a waste and his labour was her reward, a fair bargain of mutual interest. He was considered quite a barbarian by Canon, one of the old breed who had slipped the net of the civilisation that they had tried to inflict when they had took over. That was in Canus' great, great grandfather's day so there were not too many of Canus' mindset about as you can imagine, anyway on with the tale.

"Here he is," Canon said as Canus entered the pub, "And it looks like he has done well at the market. A beer my direction no doubt."

"You must have seen it in the stars," Canus said with a laugh as he brought him a beer. (Hop-less, unlike today, but it tasted good and it served its purpose. They drank it like water for it was cleaner)

“Now Canus there are some things held sacred both by Man and the Gods. It does not do to mock them for you never know what it might unleash upon yourself.”

“Now Canon I’m sure they have a sense of humour,” Canus said and took a drink, “Yes a hot day and well received. I see they are making the temple bigger again, is that to cope with the rise in the number of Gods?”

“You’ll go too far and it has been noticed that you do not sacrifice Canus.”

“My labour is my sacrifice. Your priests should try it. See how fat they have become.”

“It is not your labour that brings in reward without the God’s intervention it would be worthless. You owe them a debt of obligation.”

“I am not of your faith they are your Gods and therefore your obligation.”

“Yet you take the benefit of their service come now Canus does that sound fair?”

“Is it fair that the priests get fat on the proceeds of others sweat? I am not daft Canon; I know that anything sacrificed is eaten by the priests.”

“And they deserve it; do they not keep the Gods temple clean and constantly adore them to keep us in their favour?”

“Not much of a sacrifice for the bounty they receive though is it and besides if these Gods are so powerful how is it they are only confined to the temples. I would have thought they’d be everywhere.”

“They are everywhere you can see them by their work. Is it not their wind that helps you with your winnowing?”

“No it is just wind. I don’t know how it comes to be, that I freely admit, but I have noticed that it is not controlled.”

“Is it not they that send it? That is their control.”

“Well if that’s the case they pay little heed to the priests and their sacrifice. The wind has a mind of its own. It is not subject to any intervention.”

“You are just a barbarian there is no reasoning with you.”

“I am a realist I see things as they are. Your Gods change with time yet the wind never alters,” he finished the rest of his drink and said, “Just like this pot they are an empty vessel, a space that needs filling.”

“Ale wife two more of the same,” Canon said and it was quickly done. Canon took a large drink and said, “You have a poetic turn of phrase it is just a shame that it is meaningless.”

“It works for me,” Canus said and took a drink, “Just like those Gods of yours.”

“There is no talking to you,” Canon said and left him to it. Canus returned home not long afterwards to be greeted by Tira with some bread and honey.

“Busy day Canus?” she said on his entry, “This will give you strength,” and he ate heartedly. After he had finished he said, “Sure that serves its purpose. I was talking to that Canon earlier; he certainly can spin a yarn. He was on about sacrifices again. Is it not bad enough the king takes a hefty cut?”

“That’s a different thing entirely we have enemies all around us and must have protection.”

“I can understand that to some extent it is the extravagance of it that I have the problem with. It is all high tech. now and costs accordingly I mean take those chariots for instance, what do they cost?”

“They are well worth the price see how they decimate our enemy’s lines. They have proved themselves on many an occasion.”

“They do a fair job I must admit,” Canus conceded, “But for what they cost you would have thought they would be more mobile. They can’t turn around by themselves for a start and the amount of times they overturn, they’re dangerous.”

“They have brought us nothing but honour and prestige I don’t know how you dare criticise them.”

“All I am saying is for what they cost they could have been better. Yes, it certainly is an expensive business war. Siege engines, fortified towns and people paid to do nothing but kill, shields, axes, bows everything drains.”

“That is the times now I’m afraid, mind you I guess it has always been that way.”

“True,” Canus said and the scene changed to Canon, still in the pub and with different company, “So anyway I was finishing of the annual returns and the manager wanted me to stop over,” Silus said to a bored Canon, “Can’t do that I said to him I’ve other things to do. Like what he says. Well I told him it was my own business and he left in a huff. I mean it’s not my fault there’s an eclipse due is it?”

At that Canon’s interest picked up, “An eclipse, when would that be then?”

“2 days around noon can’t see what all the fuss is about. Mind you I’m only a temple scribe, what do I know?”

“No, it marks an important event. And they were in a hurry to get everything ready?” and went deep in thought but for the life of him he could not think what it could be.

“I would have thought that you would have known about it, doing what you do. Doesn’t that come in your range?”

“My mind has been elsewhere, the King’s nephew.”

“Oh the possession, any further forward?”

“No progress at all, my reputation is at stake here. I’ve done everything that I could for him. Chants, transference but that demon won’t budge. Weeks now it has been. I’ve been here most of the day and here I will stay just to keep out of the way. Ale wife another two if you please.”

“Cheers so what are you going to do then? He is the King’s favourite and the King is not someone I would like to upset.”

“I know and I also know his patience is running very thin with me. I’ve called to the Gods but they pay me no heed. I fear that I might have to leave this place soon as it will be more than my life’s worth to stay.”

“Something will turn up but I would keep my possessions ready just in case.”

“Not a word too popular with me at the moment but I understand what you are saying.”

“So how do you think it actually happened then?” Silus said quietly after he had looked around to make sure no one was listening, “They say that he was tampering with forces unknown any truth in that?”

“Who knows for sure they’re keeping pretty quiet about it. They say that he was in the temple when it happened.”

“Maybe he has displeased a God then.”

“Well if that’s the case then nothing I do is going to work maybe it is that then.”

“Sounds logical to me but where does that leave you? I mean not being funny but if you did manage to rid him would that mean that you would be going against their will.”

“No. You are right and it is a good point that you make. I’ve never really thought about it before.”

“Quite a predicament ale wife two more if you please.”

“Thanks,” Canon said and took a large draught.

“And the eclipse,” Silus said adding to his woes, “You said that it marked an important event. What about the death of the King’s nephew? He has been under their power for that long surely he can’t survive much longer.”

“The signs aren’t looking good,” Canon said, finished his drink, made his excuses and left. He had a lot on his mind and he wanted some signs of his own. He read some entrails but all they signified was death so when he went to sleep that night he was very restless. Not really the right frame of mind to meet a demon in.

“What is this?” he said in fear and then thinking it might be a God, “This is not about that demon is it? I did not know that he had upset you.”

“No,” Bruga said, “This is a different matter entirely. I want to know why an animal should lose its life over something as trivial as your death.”

“My death that is not trivial to me. Am I to die then?”

“Eventually, I mean you are mortal after all,” and laughed much to Canon’s unease.

“But I am safe for a while?” Canon said his paramount thought over riding everything else.

“For the moment, it has been decided that instead of animals losing their lives I will teach you how to read signs properly.”

“Right and which God has sent you or are you Enki himself?”

“I am an elemental what you choose to call me is no real concern to me. First though your other problem. It appears Golash has been a naughty boy and has managed to get possessed.”

“Yes and there seems no way of getting rid of it. How did it come about if you don’t mind me asking?”

“Nothing is hidden he is being taught a lesson that’s all. He tried to use powers for their uncreated purpose and it is not a thing we take lightly.”

“Was this at the temple? For that is what I heard.”

“Yes, now weather forecasting we will put up with as it helps Man but a nephew asking us to kill his uncle. No, that’s not on.”

“So it is you that consults with the High Priest I thought it was just folklore.”

“Well hoc, I feel sorry for Golash, hoc does not suffer fools gladly. He’s been down long enough so he will release him next time you ask. Problem solved.”

“Maybe but it brings more problems. I did not realise that Golash was after the kingship for a start.”

“Only natural with the warped power he has hold of they turn on each other like dogs for it. It is not your problem though.”

“If I don’t mention it and he tries and fails the King will not be happy with me for I should have predicted it and if he tries and succeeds Golash will look at me with contempt and think me useless. He would not trust his safety to me.”

“My you mortals live complicated lives. You must tell him but then if I were you I would get a more useful job. Have you ever considered farming?”

“What?”

“Yes, that oneness with the land you would find it very fulfilling. Look at Canus, do you see him stressed like you are.”

“I’ll give it some thought,” Canon said not meaning it.

“In time maybe but I have sensed that my presence has brought some confusion to you.”

“Well yes. Your friend hoc, you said that he had talked to the High Priest about the weather. He is Enki isn’t he?”

“I’m sure he would love that,” Bruga said with a laugh, “No, he is the Earth Mothers go between, her right hand man if you like.”

“And these priests he will only talk to them?”

“Whoever compels him I suppose, he only ever sees one man he’s told me so I guess that would be your High Priest.”

“Compels him, so all this adoration then?”

“Not on his behalf, pointless anyway, it is just hot air.”

“Oh and the food?”

“No good to him he can’t eat it.”

“So all this then, however did it come to be this way?”

“Evolution I guess it all comes from extortion really, it is just that you have refined it.”

“What?”

“Yes, whoever held the water made their demands and who ever didn’t had no choice but to go along with them. They rationed it out as they saw fit and it all grew from that.”

“I never knew.”

“So confusion all gone then,” Bruga said and disappeared.

Canon woke up to a banging door. It was Sellan of the Royal Guard and he was not too happy. “The King requests your presence immediately, refusal brings pain or death.”

“What’s this all about Sellan,” Canon said half asleep.

“He ain’t too happy with you my friend,” Sellan said as they quickly made the short journey, “We looked for you all yesterday. Where did you get to anyway?”

“I was in the pub,” Canon said sheepishly.

“Don’t tell him that or you will never see nightfall. He’s not happy at all with you my friend. He has a low opinion of your abilities at the moment. It did not help when Phal told him about this forthcoming eclipse either. He said that you should have predicted it as it’s your job. I think they are going through a bit of a power struggle at the moment so it was not a good time.”

“I’ve been with his nephew day and night for I would not even like to guess how long. I’ve had no time for anything else.”

“Oh you have my sympathy I have seen what you have been through. You cannot tell Ibbisin though he would not see it that way.”

“Well I think I can cure his nephew now at least that will go in my favour.”

“Really what’s the story then?”

“That I cannot really say until I have seen the King. It appears there is treachery in the air. We are here now so I will tell you later.”

“Canon,” Ibbisin bellowed, “Where have you been? How dare you disappear when I am in need of you?”

“I have been trying to find a cure for your nephew and I think that I have the answer but if that is the case then I’m afraid I have bad news for you.”

“What?” Ibbisin snapped, “No riddles what are you talking about?”

“I am afraid he has been possessed for a reason, abuse of power. He intended to do you harm but it came back on him.”

“Make sense it sounds to me that you are saying Golash has designs on treachery. Not an accusation to throw at my favourite.”

“It is true I’m afraid he was trying to harness the power of the Gods for his own end.”

“I cannot believe that, hold your tongue lest I cut it off.”

“There is a way to prove it,” Sellan said, “If I might make so bold.”

“Go on,” Ibbisin said.

“Well he has tried everything he can to move it,” Sellan said, “I would say that if he could cure him now that would add weight to his case.”

“Very well,” Ibbisin said and they went to his nephew who was tied to the bed, foaming at the mouth.

“See if you can do anything with that,” Ibbisin said and Canon went over and said, “Great hoc, he has suffered much and I think he has learned his lesson. Please release him if that be your will and let him learn by his mistake.”

With that Golash stopped his struggling and lay breathless on the bed.

“It is true,” Ibbisin said, “I would never have thought it unless I saw it myself.”

He grabbed Golash by the throat and said, “Why, you would have been King next anyway?”

“It is ordained,” Golash said, “The forthcoming eclipse is my signal.”

“What is this?” Ibbisin said, “Speak clear and quickly lest you lose your life to my sword.”

“I am finished what does it matter?”

“Who else was involved?” Ibbisin said shaking him, “You did not come to this decision by yourself.”

“I cannot say.”

“Not if your life depended on it,” Ibbisin said and drew his sword. He threw Golash back down on the bed and putting the sword to his throat, “I am not a man to be silent to.”

“I cannot say even at the point of your sword and knowing it will be my death.”

“We will leave you tied a little longer to see if you change your mind,” Ibbisin said and took Canon to one side and said, “It appears you are right. Someone must be behind this, someone he is more scared of than death itself. You mentioned the power of the Gods?”

“That is what I was told.”

“Anything else?”

“No but if it’s any aid it is rumoured that he got it in the temple.”

“Right, you have done me a good service and for that I thank you. It is not done yet. I want you to try and find out the truth behind this so I have all the details before I make my move. Time is of the essence though for that forthcoming eclipse is some sort of signal.”

“My lord,” Canon said and departed. He reasoned that he would ask the figure that night so decided to visit the pub to waste a few hours until then. It was there that he found Canus. “It is lucky for some,” he said greeting him before buying him a drink.

“The work is done for awhile besides I could say the same thing to you.”

“No matter it is too fine a day for us to bicker like children.”

“What but that is what I come in for?”

“You enjoy it” Canon said in surprise for he had never seen it in that light, he saw it more as one upmanship, no more.

“Yes it keeps my mind honed and sharp. Is it not good to banter?”

“I’ve never thought about it that way before. Mind you, you will get no argument about the Gods from me any more,” and went on to tell Canus what Bruga had told him.



“I knew that something did not add up, it did not make sense, if these Gods of yours did exist what good is food to them for they cannot eat it. And as for adoration it is too inane for them surely.”

“Well it seems you are right, it leaves me in a little predicament though.”

“It does?”

“I need to believe in something. All that I have believed in was a lie before. What do you believe in?”

“Mother Earth and Father Sun to me they are all that matters.”

“But you don’t adore them how do you actually serve them?”

“By not taking more than I need and by finding my place in the scheme of things, oh, and trying to be good to my fellow man.”

“Is that it and it works?”

“For me it seems to,” Canus said and finished his drink, “Anyway I’ve got a few things to do,” and bid him goodbye. Canon was joined not long after by Silus. “Heavy day and no mistake,” he said as he got them both a drink, “That manager has definitely got it in for me now. Vindictive son of a wolf.”

“They all still in a flap then?”

“No the accounts are in order and up to date, it’s just that he does not forget.”

“Oh so what was it all about. Did you ever find out?”

“Never found out and I was not that interested to ever try. No, it’s their problem and theirs alone.”

“Could you though? I meant if you had a mind for it.”

“I suppose so I would just have to ask old Simey, he’s got his ear close to the ground.”

“I wouldn’t mind, they have got all their accounts in order ready for an eclipse. It sounds like they know something.”

“Know something?”

“Well an eclipse signals a major event coming though why would getting their accounts in order be relevant?”

“I’ll ask him then.”

Canon brought another round and said, “Canus has just gone. You have just missed him in fact.”

“Shame that I wanted to see him about something but I guess it will have to keep.”

“Oh anything I can do?”

“No, it is more Canus’ field. My boat has got a leak and he’s pretty good with things like that.”

“Yes he’s pretty adaptable isn’t he? He seems to be able to turn his hand to anything.”

“And he’s a lot cheaper than any boat builder,” Silus said with a laugh, “If you see him before me would you tell him?”

“Sure are you planning to go anywhere then?”

“I thought I would take the good lady out,” Silus said and then laughed, “It might save me a lot of earache.”

“Things bad eh?”

“They have been better she says that she never sees me at all now, what with work and that.”

“Women they never cease to re assure me that I was right in not taking up with one,” and their conversation turned to their second favourite subject, women bashing.

“Well sometimes I wonder myself, you work hard all day and come home tired, all you do is want a rest but there is no chance of that. There are jobs they want doing and things they want fetching .No, sometimes I think I would rather be like you. You are your own man and accountable to no woman.”

“There is that I suppose but I would not say I was my own man. The King sees to that.”

“Oh I meant to ask you, how did you get on with his nephew?”

“It is done he suffers no more.”

“Quite a relief, the last time I saw you, you were making plans to leave us.”

“Daft really for there is no real place to go to. I would probably have ended up with my throat slit by some no-mad.”

“I have heard of their savagery and there still is Ishbi Erra. No it is not a safe place to travel without the King’s protection. But it is not a problem you need worry about any longer.”

“True,” Canon said and finished his drink and Silus ordered two more.

“While this is flowing I’m not going,” Silus said and took a large drink.

“My sentiment exactly,” Canon said and did the same and as the day turned to night they bewailed their life and bemoaned their fate.

## **Chapter 2**

Canon’s journey to the Netherworld (the term was now back in fashion) proved to be very enlightening.

“Signs,” Bruga said without greeting him, “Where to begin? Direction, that will do for a start .North, South, East, West.”

“Not being funny but do I really need to know that?”

“It’s paramount, now I know you can do it through the stars but there is a much easier way. One you can do it daylight.”

“There is?” Canon said in surprise, his interest picking up.

“Trees or more precisely branches.”

“Really?”

“Yes, see how they are steeper on one side of the tree than the other.”

“Yes I have noticed that.”

“That is the north side, you might also find that the moss is less greener on the same side so use that as a guide .The branches on the south are more shallow to can catch the Sun for that is the route it travels.”

“I’ll bare that in mind and the fact that it rises in the east and sets in the west.”

“Yes, I will have to get up early in the morning to catch you out.”

“And what about prophecy, you said that you would teach me so I did not need to kill any more animals.”

“Prophecy is it; your High Priest thinks the forthcoming eclipse heralds your King’s demise. He has made deals with both Ishbi Erra and the Elamites to aid this purpose. To the West the Amorites gather with invasion in mind so your power is about to come to an end. Now as to the kings actual fate he will return to Ur to see it attacked and destroyed and find himself in a life of captivity.”

“What is all this true?”

“Yes and your fate.”

“Mine,” Canon said nervously, “Perhaps some things are best unsaid.”

“Sometimes, but sometimes if you know the future you can take steps to avoid it.”

“So the King might be safe?”

“No that is destined to happen. What goes around comes around I’m afraid. It’s a spiritual law.”

“We have them ourselves.”

“Yes but most of them are man made. Anyway the King’s fate is sealed and if not soon it is only a matter of time. No, his fate is assured and if you are not very careful he will take you with him. When he leaves Ur you must remain here.”

“I have no real choice if he leads I must follow.”

“Then you are doomed,” Bruga said and disappeared.

Canon woke up with very mixed emotions. Should he tell the King and warn him of his fate or just keep quiet and leave him to his fate. It was quite a complicated predicament for he knew that if he told him he would seal his own fate. The King would never release him from his bond because he would be too useful to the King and so the King’s fate would drag him down along with the King. His immediate summons did not help either. The King was agitated and pacing up and down. “Still he says nothing,” he said without greeting, “It’s something to do with the eclipse but for the life of me I know not what.” Canon decided to tell him but be selective, “The Priests think it is to herald your death. It seems that Phal is in secret talks with Ishbi Erra and also he is in secret talks with the Elamites.”

“What? You know I should have known. Treacherous dog, his life will come to an end,” and with that Phal was sent for and the full extent of the plot uncovered. Phal met his end and Ibbisin took a new interest in Canon.

“Our enemies are all around us,” he said later that day, “Is it not bad enough that they come from within too. Soon I return to Ur and still that eclipse hangs over us. I want you to find out what it portends if you can. For if it is not my death it must be some ones,” and dismissed him and Canon went straight round to the pub.

“Canus, Silus,” he said on entrance, “Let me get you both a drink,” and did just that.

After they got comfortable Silus said, “Old Simey hadn’t a clue, mind you there’s been a lot happening since then. They arrested Phal on treachery charges and now he lies dead for his actions.”

“It appears he has been dealing with our enemies. Is nothing sacred, not even in a temple?”

“Yes,” Silus said, “I fear that the world is closing down around us. You do not seem too concerned though Canus.”

“It’s happened before and it will happen again just go with the flow I guess.”

“You don’t fear their sword?” Silus said.

“Why should they kill me I am useful to them. No, I would say that I am pretty safe.”

“Oh yes,” Silus said, “And me too, perhaps I’m worrying too much.”

“Ah, I am afraid that you are part of the bureaucracy. They will have their own people for that probably. At the end of the day it depends on the ease of your job.”

“Sorry?” Silus said.

“If they think its hard work they won’t do it themselves if not then you are dispensable.”

“Well looking at my job I would say that I was pretty safe,” Silus said, “Now Canon on the other hand.”

“My fate lies with the King,” Canon said, “But if it didn’t I’m sure they would find me

pretty useful.”

“Well that would depend on how good you are I suppose,” Silus said, “I mean I am guessing they would have their own people so you would have to be better than them.”

“True,” Canon said, “It looks like I am packing my possessions again.”

“You might be safe,” Silus said, “After all you are well thought of in your field.”

“No,” Canon said, “The King heads for Ur soon and I have a feeling that he wants to take me with him.”

“You’ll be safer in Ur,” Silus said, “You have nothing to worry about.”

“Maybe,” Canon said and said no more.

Seeing the way that the conversation was going Canus changed the subject,

“I will be around tomorrow to have a look at your boat,” he said to Silus, “You said that you were going away for a while?”

“Yes,” Silus said, “I thought that I would take a trip down to the Great Lake and have a sail round.”

“Sounds a good idea,” Canon said, “I wouldn’t mind coming myself.”

“You are more than welcome on my account,” Silus said, “But I will have to clear it first which might be a problem. She thinks I spent too much time with you as it is,”

“It wasn’t a big thing,” Canon said, “Besides I fear I will be going to Ur before you make that trip.”

“You sound like you don’t want to go,” Silus said, “I thought you would be pleased to go up to the big city.”

“Normally,” Canon said, “But I fear it is not safe at the moment.”

“Ur,” Silus said, “That’s the safest place to be. If that falls what hope have we got? No I say you would be better off there,” and finished his drink, “Any way I’m going to show my woman what a real man is,” hic cupped, got up and left them to it.

“It sounds like you know something,” Canus said after Silus left, “Have you seen any more of what did you call it, elemental?”

“Yes and he made things pretty clear. It is not advisable to be around the King for he is fated to fall. He will be captured and the city ruined, it is already written.”

“Maybe but why should you suffer because of his fate, don’t go. It’s as simple as that.”

“Ah but it isn’t my friend, he wants me to go with him and what he wants he gets.”

“Disappear, take to the hills and wait till he’s gone and suffered his fate. Come back when it’s all over and no one would be any the wiser.”

“How will I live? I wouldn’t have a clue. The elemental has only showed me how to get directions from trees; there are not many trees around for a start.”

“Well I’m guessing he will be telling you a lot more, ask him for some advice on your situation.”

“He suggested farming but he has advised me not to go to Ur already though I can’t really see me getting out of it.”

“You are welcome to hide out with me for a while but see what the elemental says first.”

“Fair enough,” Canon said and finished his drink. He said good bye to Canus and headed for home. He soon fell to sleep and was in Bruga’s company once more. “You had to tell him,” Bruga said shaking his head, “Why did you curse yourself to his fate?”

“I couldn’t see him suffer.”

“I know your motives were good I would not still be here otherwise. No you did what you had to do but where does that leave you now?”

“Ah I thought you might be able to advise me on that?”

“Waste of time as you will never listen,” Bruga said with a laugh, “I would say stop at Canus and if it gets too hot head for the hills.”

“We’ll see, I thought you might have a different idea. Is there no alternative for it seems a poor choice.”

“I’m afraid you have closed all the other options. You have forced yourself into a corner.”

“I know, oh that eclipse that is due tomorrow. Do you know its significance?”

“Yes, it means the Moon is blocking the Sun,” Bruga said with a laugh, “But I would hardly call it significant.”

“What, isn’t it a portend of something?”

“Well alright it signals the birth of a spiritual leader. It is the mergence of the elements of Fire, the Sun and Water, the Moon.”

“And this leader?”

“It is far to the east of you I doubt if you will ever see the eclipse. I’m afraid hoc likes his little jokes.”

“A joke?”

“Yes he’s a bit of a trickster at times. Your Priest wanted a sign so he mentioned it.”

“Wanted a sign?”

“To seal the deal with the rival king, it had been agreed that Golash would reign in Ibbisins place. They were to unite and take the Amorites head on, then double back and take on the Elamites.”

“And you also mentioned a deal with the Elamites how does that fit in?”

“Phal reasoned that they might lose so made a deal of his own. He told them that he would let them know when the attack would be. These are the people that you deal with Canon. Are you sure you don’t want to be a farmer?”

“The idea is getting more appealing I admit, these are definitely treacherous people. Where is the loyalty nowadays?”

“Your King is probably of the same ilk I fear that when faced with danger he will quickly lose it.”

“My thoughts are the same I should have kept my mouth shut.”

“It is done now but maybe there is another way?”

“There is? Well I’m open to suggestion.”

“First tell me something, if the King left you here what would you do?”

“I’m not sure, I would say carry on in as much the normal but I don’t think that too wise.”

“And why not? It is right what you say but I want to know if you have the right reasoning behind it.”

“It is not a safe job to be in. I would probably be dispensable to the next lot of rulers.”

“Oh, that was not the answer I was looking for.”

“It wasn’t?”

“No, it should have been more on the lines of it serves no useful purpose and only enhances my pride.”

“Oh.”

“When you have reached that level of understanding then I can help you otherwise it would just be a waste.”

“Would you help me, that sounds well beyond my grasp?”

“Sure, you are created to serve a purpose that is inherent in your nature. When you serve this purpose it gives you a sense of well being, well a useful purpose that is for one that is not will give you stress.”

“I think I can understand that but could you define what a useful purpose is?”

“A useful purpose is a purpose for the good of the whole without self interest. Canus serves a useful purpose but that is not just the job he does it is also the fact that he does not take more than he needs.”

“Well the King serves a useful purpose then for he serves as our war leader.”

“War is not a useful purpose except for keeping the population down and besides a King takes a lot more than he needs.”

“Why is that so important if you don’t mind me asking?”

“If you take more than you need someone has to go without it is another law and also a truism. All that power. The King, his Priests and Administers it has all been cursed for it makes them proud and hard hearted on one hand and people lose equality from it on the other.”

“And this power you said that it enhanced pride?”

“It makes you think you are better than another but it also brings you envy as you look to others with more power than you. Now the power also makes you avaricious because you gauge the benefits of the power that way and then you wonder why you get all the stress.”

“Right and you say that the job I do serves no useful purpose, is that because I serve the King?”

“One reason,” Bruga said, “But also as it is not really a useful job. It is only there to enhance pride. You have been using it to uphold the King’s.”

“Yes I see but what if I still used the power but not for the King.”

“You could do but then you would end up like your Priests. No the information you receive should be free because it cost you nothing and because it is a spiritual gift. You can use the gift but if I were you I would get another means of supporting myself.”

“Fair enough. Yes, I think I understand it now.”

“So what are your intentions again?”

“I will get a different job but I will still keep my hand in.”

“Good,” Bruga said and disappeared. He reappeared a fraction of a second later and said

“All done your King will no longer require your services.”

“What, just like that.”

“Yes just like that.”

“Fair enough.” Canon said. To anyone interested in what happened I will relate it (if not skip ahead and pick it up again at “Right, now that’s sorted.”)

In Ibbisin’s trip to the Netherworld he was walking through the desert with the Sun beating hard on his back. He did not know why for he had no control but he did know it was for a reason. Ahead in the distance he saw a great cave and soon he was at its entrance. “Come in,” a voice shouted and he came face to face with Bruga, “They tell me you are a King how is it that you show bad judgement?”

“What,” Ibbisin said, “I was not aware of it.”

“You listen to others when as a King you should not need to. That is not good, not good at all.”

“But I need to be advised I cannot be expected to know ever thing.”

“The old Kings didn't they came to me and I advised them. Take that eclipse tomorrow.”

“Yes what is its significance?”

“It isn't going to happen that's its significance.”

“What?”

“See what you get when you listen to others. When you listen to others I cannot do my job.”

“Your job?”

“I am supposed to be your adviser. You have other advisers so shun my services.”

“I was not aware of this.”

“That is why I have appeared to you. Your world is closing in around you and you don't know where to turn. I have made myself aware to you before it is too late.”

“Things are bad I will admit so you have come to help me out of it.”

“If you let me.”

“Tell me what I must do.”

“You must not take Canon to Ur for he is not needed. You are a King so that power is yours.”

“But he is good at what he does.”

“And why do you think that is. It is because I have been helping him. Now though I want to deal direct with you. We do not need a middle man. You are a King. That is what I serve.”

“Then I will leave him here,” Ibbisin said and thought awhile before saying, “When did you start to advise him?”

“Golash's possession, it was I that told him the reason behind it and the treachery planned against you.”

“That would explain it, he was useless before then and then suddenly he is the font of all wisdom.”

“He is alright at what he does but he is not to be relied on for you are a King and dependent on no man. Canon is a good man and as a mark of appreciation for his service you should give him a boat. This will show you to be open handed, the true mark of a King. You deal only with me from now on. These are dangerous times that we live in so I cannot emphasise that point enough. I am now your adviser and will be until this predicament is sorted,” and disappeared.

“Right, now that's sorted,” Bruga said, “I can get on with what I came to do, signs and signals. Now sometimes there are no trees around and you have to use another method.”

“I was going to say, we seem to have a short supply around here.”

“It does work with flora too they flower heavier to the south but that is not the method I am going to tell you. No, you can also find direction from the Sun, a stick and its shadow.”

“Really?”

“Yes, first of all you must find a piece of land that's both flat and free of vegetation. Put the stick upright in the sand (about 1m long) and then mark the top with either a pebble or another stick. The top of the shadow I mean and not the top of the stick.”

“Right,” Canon said taking it all in.

“Now leave it a while (at least a quarter of an hour) and you will see that the shadow has moved. Mark the top of the shadow in its new position and then join them both together. You now have the directions of East and West. West is the first mark and East the

second. It is far more accurate than the rising and setting Sun though if you have more time there is an even more accurate way with the shadow and two sticks, do you want to hear it?"

"If I have the time," Canon said with a laugh.

"Funny, the first part is the same except that you do it in the morning. Use the original stick as a centre point and strike an arc with the other stick from the top of the shadow.. You can do this by tying a twine between the two. Now as mid day approaches the shadow will get smaller and then lengthen again in the afternoon. Mark the spot where it touches the arc once more and join the points together. That is the East to West line. West being the first mark."

"I'll keep that in mind though I can't really see a need for it."

"Life may throw up strange situations is it not good to be prepared?"

"Well true I suppose."

"Good, well that will do for the time being," and disappeared.

Canon woke up and went straight round to see the King. He did not think that Bruga had seen him because of the short time he had been away and so was resigned to the fact he was going to Ur. The King though had other ideas. "Ah Canon," he said on seeing him, "I head for Ur tomorrow and I am afraid I have some bad news for you."

"My lord," Canon said accepting his fate.

"Yes I have no further need of your services so you may remain here if you like."

"Oh," Canon said in surprise.

"Yes, now I know you were looking forward to it and I will admit that you have served me well so this is through no fault of your own. No, this is something I can now do for myself. That eclipse that you said will happen; well I know that it will not. Noon will tell us who is right."

"I am sorry to contradict you but it was Phal that predicted it. I checked the star signs and could not find it." The voice of Bruga came into his head, "Don't blow it through your foolish pride."

"Well whatever the case, anyway as I said I can now do all this myself so your services are no longer necessary. To compensate you I have decided to give you a boat as a reward."

"A boat, my lord rewards me well."

"You deserve it, if it was not for you my life would be over by now. I will not forget you." and they parted on good terms. Canon was presented with a square sailed reed boat and he liked it immensely. He had plans of sailing down to the Great Lake and maybe even further. Noon passed and the eclipse did not come reaffirming the King's belief in his new source of power and when he left for Ur he felt invincible.

Canon was in the pub when he left, hiding in case he changed his mind, and in deep conversation with Canus.

"Close thing that," he said, "Mind you I got a boat out of it so I'm not complaining."

"He gave you a boat," Canus said looking at him with keen interest, "What are you going to do with it?"

"I thought that I might go around the Great Lake awhile and see what's about after that I'm not sure."

"You could find a lot more useful purpose than that and I am guessing that with the King now gone you are in need of a living."



“I was thinking of changing my vocation now you’ve mentioned it. I was even considering farming.”

“It’s a good choice but you know that grime doesn’t pay. You might have to lower your standard of living to compensate.”

“I could do that but now I have this boat it opens up a lot more opportunities to me.”

“Very true plus it’s a handy means of escape should the invasion rumours come true.”

“Well there is that and I could make a living from it while I am waiting for it to happen. Yes, I can only see good coming out of it.”

“Good, so what were you thinking about then, fishing?”

“Maybe or even pearl diving I might even use it for trading with the Indus people. Yes there are plenty of opportunities.”

“And your old trade, do you still intend to keep your hand in?”

“Now and again although I won’t charge for it now No, it was freely given to me so it would be an insult if I did.”

“You surprise me, you really do.”

“Well it’s not really useful is it, you seem to get a sense of well being from your work and that is something I have never had. Maybe because when I charge that is its own reward, I’m not sure. Anyway I’ve decided not to charge now so maybe I’ll get that sense of well being too.”

“Worth a try though I think my sense of well being comes from the land itself.”

“It will be a lot less stressful anyway most of the people I am dealing with now are too treacherous. No, the sooner I get another vocation the better.”

“I’ll drink to that,” Canus said and emptied his cup, “Ale wife 2 more if you please.”

### **Chapter 3**

Canus took a drink and said, “Oh I fixed Silus’ boat for him, so maybe you’ll have company when you travel.”

“That should be good,” Canon said and just then Silus entered, “I thought that you would be gone,” he said on seeing Canon, “I saw the procession as it left.”

“No,” Canon said with a laugh, “That is why I’m in here out of the way, he might have changed his mind.”

“Too late now did he not want you along?”

“Paid me off he gave me a boat.”

“Oh good job on the boat by the way Canus,” Silus said before turning to Canon, “We are sailing tomorrow, why not follow us?”

“Sure I’ve got plenty of time,” and bought a round in. Time past, day turned to night and Canon found himself back with Bruga.

“Near miss,” Bruga said, “I thought you were coming back in his favour then. When will you mortals learn how to control your foolish pride?”

“Sorry but I did not tell him there was an eclipse coming. To tell you the truth I have not had time to check my charts, what with his nephew and everything.”

“Sometimes it is wise to keep quiet especially if your motivational force is pride. You could have ended up in Ur and believe me that is not a nice place at the moment.”

“I will try and hold my tongue in future.”

“Fair enough so all my land direction work now seems in vain for I have heard that you now have a boat.”

“Ah, the King gave it me.”

“I know I told him to.”

“You did?”

“Yes, it pays to be mobile in times like these. If you can get on with it you might want to take it further afield, maybe leave the area completely and head for the Indus people.”

“I don’t know about that it sounds a long way to travel and beside I might get lost.”

“So what about trade then you mentioned it in the pub if I remember right.”

“Ah, I might have been a little too free with my tongue; you know what pubs are like.”

“Oh. Well if it’s any help just stick to the coastline so there is not much chance of getting lost. Keep it in your sight and you’ll not go too far wrong.”

“It’s still a long way though.”

“In times of danger is it not better to be as far away as possible, that’s what I find anyway.”

“Well maybe in times of danger I will bare that in mind.”

“Good, it is always good to keep your options open. Anyway one thing I would do every time you go out in the boat is take a couple of goatskin bags with you. This will come in handy if you ever capsize.”

“I will have a word with Sellan he will be able to sort something.”

“Good,” Bruga said, “Well enjoy your trip,” and disappeared. Canon went on the trip the following day and came back 3 days later to terrible news. The city of Ur was under attack and most of the population was in fear they were next

“If Ur falls you can guarantee we will be next,” Silus said on hearing the news, “They would not have dared attack us if we were united.”

“That Ishbi Erra has a lot to answer for,” Denos the wheelwright said, “I just hope the Gods do it quickly so it happens before the Nomads get here.”

“Tracherous dog and he was our King’s most trusted general. Maybe the Nomads will go for Ishbierra after Ur instead of here.”

“Maybe but it is more than likely he has made a deal with them. I would put nothing beneath his honour.”

“Things might not be too bad,” Celus a brick maker said, “Ur hasn’t fallen and I don’t think it will. We are still a powerful people even if fragmented. These Nomads, we’ve seen them before. Our chariots have minced them many times.”

“Days gone by,” Silus said, “But maybe you are right. I just hope that the Elamites don’t unite with the Amorites for then our bread is truly cooked.”

“Yes,” Denos said, “I have heard they are savage beyond belief, nomadic pests.”

“I tell you one thing,” Silus said, “If Ur falls I am getting straight on my boat and getting out of here.”

“It’s lucky for some,” Celus said, “I’m stuck here.”

“You should be safe they will need brick makers.”

“A life of slavery no, I would rather take my own life first. Besides I think that Ur will stand firm. It is well fortified and we are still better equipped and much better fighters.”

“I admire you faith,” Denos said and then to Canon, “What do the stars say about this?”

“I’ve had no time to check, all this is news to me”

“Ah, we are worrying over nothing,” Celus said, “Ale wife, four more if you please.”

“I’ll drink to that,” Silus said “And many more I hope,” they all got their drinks and Celus said “Well there is one good side to this.”

“Sorry,” Silus said in stereo with Denos.

“It will mean more work for me repairing the damage after we have driven them off,” Celus said, “Yes, maybe I will get a boat from this.”

“Well that’s one way of looking at it I suppose,” Denos said, “But as I said I haven’t your faith.”

“Let’s not talk of war any more,” Silus said, “It is a subject best left to the warrior. Was there any other news that we missed?”

“All war related I’m afraid,” Denos said, “Taxes are up again and almost at strangling point. There’s talk of a citizen’s army. There are rumours of talks with Ishbierra to re-unite again but I think that is mere gossip, hopelessness because of the dire situation.”

“You would think that he would though,” Silus said, “I mean at the end of the day we are the chosen people being threatened by strangers.”

“I fear that he would rather talk to strangers,” Denos said, “No, he is not one of us. May the Gods curse him like he has cursed us, that is what I say. Ale wife, four more if you please,” and another round was served.

“One thing’s for sure,” Denos said, “I will make sure that there is no beer left for them.”

“Good sentiments,” Silus said and took a large draught, “It is too good for the likes of savages.”

“My thought exactly,” Celus said, “Let’s toast to our victory” and took a large gulp. They all followed suit and another round was served. Round after round came and it was a merry Canon that made his way home. Bruga was not too happy though, “What is it with you, lay off the drink, it’s getting in the way of my transmission. Ur is set to fall in 2 days but you won’t be in too much danger yet. I would say that you have a week to make your decision.”

“The Elamites?”

“The Amorites not that it matters. No, if I was you I would lay off the beer in the meantime. You want to keep a straight head at the moment.”

“Sorry I guess I must have got into a routine that’s all.”

“Fair enough now I have said that you have a week but I am afraid that you have something else to contend with and this might hamper your chances of escape.”

“I have?”

“Your services are required by the Governor it appears that he needs your advice.”

“I don’t need that. I will never be able to get away.”

“My thoughts exactly, what are your chances of refusing him?”

“Non-existent I don’t suppose you would have a word.”

“Not this time I’m afraid I should not have really gone to your King but I got away with it by saying I was upholding fate.”

“No good for the Governor then.”

“Fraid not tell him that Ur will fall in two days and the Amorites are amassing in the west. He will know the second part but tell him anyway.”

“So I had better go through with it then,” Canon said resigning himself to his fate once again.

“At the moment but go with the flow and if I can think of anything I will let you know,” and disappeared.

Canon woke up to be summoned straight away. Nervously he approached the Governor.

“You have come highly recommended, Ibbisin himself. I too am in need of a seer, and I

have guessed you have realised the seriousness of the situation and looked into it.”

“That is true.”

“Well,” the Governor said impatiently, “What have you come up with?”

“The Amorites are amassing to our west,” Canon said but before he could carry on the Governor interrupted, “they are not our concern. It’s the Elamites that are attacking Ur.”

“It is destined to fall.”

“I had a feeling it would any suggestions?”

“No ideas at all I’m afraid the stars see nothing only death.”

“Fair enough you may go. If anything changes you will let me know straight away,” and much to Canon’s surprise he was dismissed. His relief was immeasurable so the first thing he did was celebrate.

Silus, Celus and Denos were already there for they were on a crusade to drink all the beer. “Here he is,” Silus said, “And just in time as its Celus’ turn.” Canon was served a drink which he quickly swallowed and another round was called for to keep the pace going. “You look like you needed it more than us,” Silus said, “Pressures of state is it for I heard the Governor wanted to see you.”

“No, just a hot day’s thirst.”

“Come now Canon you would not be holding out on us, that is not the done thing.”

“You know as much as I do, in fact probably more as you got up earlier than me. The Governor wanted to know if I had seen anything but I hadn’t so I told him as much.”

“I thought we decided that was not a topic of conversation,” Celus said, “We have come here to get away from all that.”

“Too true,” Denos said, “So where were we, women. Tell me Canon, you never married do you ever regret it?”

“Not at all never give it a second thought.”

“What about the,” Denos said, “You know.”

“Well they say it’s nice conceiving but pregnancy is irksome,” Canon said with a laugh

“And that would be my luck.”

“No you are better off out of it,” Silus said, “Besides you might end up with a she wolf like I did.”

“Things not going too well,” Denos said.

“Not at the moment. She thinks I’m spending too much time in the pub. Ah why bother, I mean let’s be honest we are celebrating the end of the world aren’t we. One way of the other it’s all over.”

“I suppose it could be. Things will never be the same again whatever happens. It’s only a matter of time.”

“Yet she can’t see it, she said I’ve let the house go to rack and ruin but why not? If it does not get destroyed it will get taken over by some Nomad. Why should I keep my house in order for him? Ale wife another four if you please,” and the round was served and paid for. “Get rid of it now I say. They will only take it off us in taxes.”

“Good point,” Celus said, “They’ll only take it with them when they flee and leave us to our fate.”

“Do you think they will do that?” Denos said in surprise, “Just run out on us I mean.”

“I wouldn’t put it past them now you come to mention it,” Silus said, “They have done nothing but take from us.”

“No, they wouldn’t.”

“Well they’ll get no more from me anyway,” Silus said and finished his drink, “Ale wife 4 more if you please,” and the round was served again.

“You’re going a bit fast,” Canon said, “I take it that you don’t expect to be here for much longer.”

“I will drink until I can walk no more and then I will have had enough,” Silus said, “And then if life don’t look any better I’ll know I have wasted my time.”

“Well who am I to argue,” Canon said, “Ale wife, 4 more if you please.”

“Good man,” Silus said, “Come join me in oblivion,” and they drank and drank and drank. Canon went to sleep very drunk and met up with an angry Bruga, “I thought you were stopping drinking what is the matter with you?”

“I was er; celebrating,” Canon said sheepishly, “The Governor does not need me so I’m safe.”

“Not if you keep on drinking it’s clouding your judgement.”

“There is nothing else to do I mean let’s be honest, it will all be over in six days.”

“You have plenty to do; you have to get your things in order so you are ready to go for a start.”

“Well that won’t take long I’ve got plenty of time.”

“It will go before you know it. If I were you I would take a walk over to Canus tomorrow and ask him about weather predicting.”

“If you think that it’s relevant although we don’t get that much rain.”

“It’s all relevant you need to lose the ways of the city if you want to truly survive. You have lost all your basic survival skills. You have no common sense.”

“Thanks.”

“It is only natural so don’t feel offended. You have become too specialised in one field and so lost your scope. He is a child of the Moon though so he has the understanding.”

“Child of the Moon?”

“A humble man he gets his understanding from the Moon, the feminine force behind us.”

“And me?”

“A child of the Sun you get your wisdom from the Sun, the masculine force behind us. Teach him your wisdom and he will give you its understanding so between you, you will both be balanced.”

“Right I will see him first thing.”

“Good you will learn a lot from him and hopefully it will be mutual. Ur will fall by noon but you will not get the news until late afternoon.” and with that he disappeared.

Canon woke up and left the city and went to see Canus who was very surprised. “It is not like you to leave the city,” he said, “Has it burned down.”

“Not yet but it is only a matter of time.”

“Well if you take the field of an enemy, the enemy will come and take your field is it not the way?”

“We have never harmed the Amorites they have no quarrel with us.”

“I thought that it was the Elamites but anyway I was talking more of Natural Justice, what goes around comes around.”

“Oh yes I know what you are saying. Ur is to fall at noon so I guess it’s all coming to an end.”

“You have a boat now you are not restricted to the city walls. Beside it is not an end but a new beginning under a different order.”

“I wish I had your faith all I see is death.”

“It’s just a new day.”

“I don’t know how you can be so calm.”

“Is it not one of your sayings who possesses much silver may be happy, who possesses much barley may be glad but he who has nothing at all may sleep, what have I got to lose?”

“Well your life for a start the Netherworld is a poor substitute.”

(The early Mesopotamians believed that once you had passed the portals of the Netherworld you could not return again to the land of the living without providing someone else who would substitute for you. A slight variation on reincarnation but you can see the underlying trend. There was also talk of judgement on arrival by the Sun God Utu whose favour meant a more contented existence. It was not a heaven and hell situation though because the people believed it to be at best a dismal reflection of life on Earth, hence a poor substitute.)

“It is a man made perception I don’t think that it actually exists.”

“What do you think that death is final then?”

“No like the barley I will return again.”

“The barley, it does not return again only through its seed. Surely that’s talking about living on through your offspring.”

“One way of thinking about it I suppose but I look at it differently. The seed is not my offspring, it is my new life. My growth in this life defines the next for it creates the seeds.”

“Oh that’s one way of looking at it I suppose. You must think that you will just come back again then.”

“I have done many times as too have you Canon.”

“No, I would remember that surely.”

Canus laughed and said, “No, you are the stem. When you come back you will be a different personality. When you can truly grasp that you will find that death has no fear for you.”

“I see the logic it’s just that I cannot bring myself to believe it.”

“Then you cannot see the logic for that should be your faith, you have been poisoned my friend. Your belief in these Gods of yours is hampering your judgement. You have put your trust blindly to them. That is not the faith I advocate for it stunts your spiritual growth and closes your mind to alternatives. No, look to nature for your answers for the Earth Mother is all giving. Everything you need to know is all around you it is just that your pride can’t see it.”

“Well I don’t know about that I would not say that I was proud, well not much.”

“It lies within us all I’m afraid, you are not as proud as you once were though so you must be on the right path.”

“Oh, you think so,” Canon said taking heart from it, “Well I’m guessing I must be for that elemental still visits me. He said to ask you about predicting the weather although I have to admit I would rather listen to your views on life and death.”

“We’ll sort the weather predicting first there is not a lot to say about it really so it is quickly done.”

“Fair enough.”

“Generally speaking the wind brings the weather so if it comes from a certain direction

you will know it will bring a certain type of weather with it. Just make a note of the type each direction brings and it should act as a guide.”

“Oh is that it?”

“No,” Canus said with a laugh, “There is a bit more to it than that. These are rough guides though and not infallible but I find that they usually work. Clouds and their formations are more reliable and as a general rule of thumb I find that the higher the cloud the finer the weather.”

“Right I’ll bare that in mind, even though we don’t get much rain here.”

“You never know where life might take you, now onto the clouds themselves. There are ten main types of them so there is a bit to remember.”

“Fair enough I’ll try my best.”

“The first type looks like rippled sand and is comprised of small rounded masses these are normally an omen of fair weather. They normally follow a storm and dissipate to leave a clear sky. Their second type is similar but on a larger scale. They are thicker and not so white with shadows in them. These are fair weather clouds and usually appear after a storm.”

“A lot of good then,” Canon said with a laugh, “I mean the damage will already be done.”

“True but it is good to know about them for it makes you more aware of your environment.”

“My apologies please continue.”

“Well if its storm clouds you are after this should appeal, low thunder clouds. These are dark and angry looking, rectangular in shape they tower high into the sky and their flat top looks akin to an anvil. These bring hail and thunder and lightning. Then you have the fluffy clouds, when they are widely spaced it is usually an indication of fair weather but if large and many headed you might get sudden heavy showers.”

“I’ll bare that in mind.”

“It might help you when you are sailing if you see them in another wise cloudless sky that is often an indication of land for it lies beneath them.”

“Right I will definitely bare that in mind then.”

“Are you definitely leaving?”

“I guess so I can see no life for me here. I thought that I might take my chances with the people of the Indus.”

“Probably the best.”

“You and your family are welcome to join me there is plenty of room in the boat.”

“Maybe, when are you planning on going?”

“A few days.”

“I’ll talk it over with the family and let you know as soon as I can. Right, fine weather also brings high wispy clouds, white in appearance and looking like horses tails. These are formed from ice crystals which give them their white appearance. Ice particles also form another kind of cloud similar to the last but more veiny. These can produce a halo around the Sun and Moon, the bigger, the finer the weather and the smaller the more chance of rain.”

“Right.”

“Now if the sky is covered with the horse’s tail type and above it darkens and they turn to the second type that is indication of coming rain (or snow) so it’s good to keep your eyes on the sky to make sure.”

“I’ll keep that in mind.”

“The next lot is like a greyish veil through which the Moon or Sun may appear watery. If wet weather approaches they disappear as the clouds thicken and darken until you have rain. These are quite high up but you also have lower than them ones that form low dark blankets that spread gloom. These indicate rain (or snow) within four or five hours and usually the rain continues for hours.”

“Right,” Canon said starting to find it taxing.

“Don’t worry,” Canus said by way of encouragement, “There are only two left.”

“Thank the Gods,” Canon said with a laugh, “I am sure that they like having their home discussed.”

“Right,” Canus said laughing, “Anyway the next one forms a low lumpy rolling mass that usually cover the whole sky though sometimes they are thin enough for the Sun to shine through You might get light showers from these but they are more of a morning cloud that dissipates in the afternoon leaving a clear night sky. And finally you have the lowest clouds. These form a uniform layer and look like hill fog when they occur. You don’t normally get rain from them but they can produce drizzle. If you see them in the morning sky it usually means you will have a warm day.”

“So that’s all the clouds then, there can’t be much more to know about the weather surely?”

“Nearly done just the Sun and then we will be finished with the weather.”

“And then we can talk of life and death? For that has truly caught my attention.”

“Very well, now if you see a red Sun or a red sky at Sunset that means that the atmosphere holds little water so there is an unlikely hood of rain but the same sight in the morning means that a storm is approaching.”

“Right, anything else?”

“A grey morning is the start of a dry day but a grey evening indicates rain, a clear night indicates good settled weather (except at the end of summer when it might signify frost) though if followed by one with only a few stars visible that indicates a change on the way.”

“Fair enough.”

“And that’s the weather forecasted.”

#### **Chapter 4**

“So onto life then,” Canon said, “We have always been told that we were created to uphold the will of the Gods and therefore we are their slaves. What are your views on that?”

“Close it was the Earth Mother’s will but we are not slaves to it for our will is free. If we go against it she is not vindictive though. It is when we go against spiritual laws’ that our life gets miserable but that is an action of our own free will.”

“Yes but surely it is the Gods that make these laws. We have long lists of them.”

“No these laws which you talk about are made by man. The ones I am talking about are completely different. They are divine laws that uphold themselves. They do not need Gods to uphold them.”

“Oh, and you know these laws?”

“Sure would you like to hear them?”

“Well yes they would be useful to know.”



“To picture them you need to imagine a six pointed star two triangles one of them inverted and the other normal. The normal triangle is the triangle of Natural Justice. At its peak is the first law and that is that creation regulates itself.”

“Right so no Gods uphold it.”

“No if you lean too far forward you fall over. That’s not an act of the Gods it is just a natural reaction.”

“Yes I can see that.”

“Good now this comes in two forms, what you sow so shall you reap and what goes around comes around. The first one is quite ironic and happens in the same lifetime. Golash would be a fair example of that. He wanted to harm the King and harmed himself in the process.”

“Yes I can see that although we usually attribute those actions to the Gods and their tempers.”

“You already have the knowledge it is just that you have mystified it so some could make a living from it.”

“The Priests,” Canon said upon realisation.

“That’s right although your kings are not without blame. Now the second one what goes around comes around works on two levels. It might mean that you atone for your actions in another lifetime on one level but it also means, well what your people are going through at the moment.”

“The fields.”

“Good, now the inverted triangle is the triangle of life. At the very bottom is that in the eyes of the Earth Mother we are all created equal. This is the law that trips up your kings. From this law you get the living of your life and the enhancement of your life. For the living of your life you have the Law of Humility and that says that if you take more than you need someone has to go without. It is called humility for greed creates pride to justify itself.”

“I never knew and yet it makes perfect sense.”

“And finally the Law of Love you have to give in order to receive. This is the sense of well being that you get for upholding the purpose that the Earth Mother gave to you.”

“Yes that elemental was on about something like that. So that’s the laws then. I’ll make sure that I remember them.”

“You’ll find a lot more fulfilling life if you do. Anyway is there anything else while you are here?”

“When I asked you what you believed in you said Father Sun and Mother Earth you must not believe in the God of heaven.”

“To me that is Father Sun, it’s just been over rationalised that’s all. I think all these Gods of yours came from the stories you tell, it was just a botch job.”

“Well they are not too consistent if you look a little deeper into them so what created the Sun the Moon and Earth?”

“Grandmother Creation, from her came the Sun, Moon and Earth and from them we became.”

“Amazing and if I told you one of these stories would you be able to tell me what it actually meant?”

“I could give it a go which one did you have in mind?”

“The story of Ninhursag and her 8 special plants do you know it?”

“Not very well.”

“Never mind I will relate it. From paradise Ninhursag caused 8 special plants to grow after a complicated set of events that required the conception of successive generations of Goddess’ all sired by Enki. Now Enki was tempted by these plants and got his servant Isimud to pluck them and bring them to him. Ninhursag heard the plants had been eaten and so she cursed Enki to die then left the council of the Gods. From the curse Enki fell ill from a sickness affecting 8 of his body organs’ and as his death neared his fellow deities mourned but nothing could be done without Ninhursag’s presence. A clever fox managed to entice her to return and then she saved his life by creating 8 deities who restored each of his ailing organs to health.”

“Quite a story,” Canus said and thought for a moment, “Ninhursag is Mother Earth and Enki being water is life. The 8 special plants are 8 natural laws that mould our lives.”

“Sorry? Natural laws.”

“I will tell you them then you will understand. They are that each animal (organism) is to be adapted to the best of its ability to survive in the climate around it, to survive in the habitat around it, to survive in the social climate around it, to attract a mate, to give the offspring the best chance of survival that it can, to hunt and defend, to find its niche in the eco system and the main one to evolve to its purpose.”

“Right.”

“Now to evolve to your purpose might mean coming back again and again that is the successive generations and sired by Enki being water means given life. That is the first part of it.”

“That’s astounding so what about the other part then and what is it actually about?”

“Man’s quest for immortality when Enki ate the plant he became mortal, a normal man or just you and me. It is talking about us and the basic laws that give us life and Ninhursag leaving the council is symbolic of our ignorance of the Earth Mother.”

“Yes, I could go with that but what about the eight ailing organs?”

“This came about through ignorance of the Earth Mother, to evolve to ones purpose did not have a purpose and so became the spirit without purpose and all the seven other laws character flaws. Your shadow self and what it is made of.”

“These character flaws could you tell me what they are and how they came to be?”

“Sure when we evolved past basic survival the laws lost a lot of power over us. We are not nomads and we do not need to travel to escape the harsher winter weather, we got slothful. We could now excel in the habitat around us so we got avaricious, the social climate around us gave us envy, attracting a mate turned to lechery, our offspring became our pride, our ability to defend and hunting drive gave us anger and we could not find our niche in the eco system we got gluttonous.”

“So that’s sloth avarice, envy, lechery, pride anger and gluttony yes I can understand them being called character flaws.”

“Good now the fox is insight and that what gives you knowledge of the Earth Mother and her knowledge which gets rid of the flaws and when you have done that you become like Enki was immortal.”

“Amazing and all that was hidden?”

“Yes anything else I might help you with?”

“Oh no that will do for now. You have gave me more than enough to think about.”

“Well any time you like, are you down the pub later?”

“I might give it a miss that elemental thinks I’m drinking too much and I think he’s probably right.”

“You don’t have to drink too heavily I don’t think it’s compulsory.”

“I’m just trying to keep up. Silus and a couple of others have decided to drink the pub dry to stop any invaders getting it.”

“There might not be any left when you get there then I’ve seen Silus when he has a thirst. He’s unquenchable,” and started laughing.

“True, well I had better get back. Thank you for all that and think about what I have said. The Indus are a good people.”

“I will let you know first thing tomorrow, well second thing if you’re going down the pub.”

Canon laughed and bid him farewell before making his way back to the city. It was late afternoon and the news of Ur’s fall had just arrived so everyone was in a panic. He did not get too far in before he met up with Silus. “Ur has fallen,” he said, “They say that it is to be flattened. What is to become of us?”

“I would take your boat and family and leave that is what I am going to do.”

“When are you to go, we can go together if you like.”

“A couple of days, I am going to try my hand with the people of the Indus. You are most welcome to come. I have also asked Canus and family so tell no one else as there’s no room in the boat.”

“Fair enough are you going down the pub?”

“I’d better not I’ve a few things to do before I go.”

“That’s a couple of days away we have plenty of time. Go on, we can toast our new start, quietly though for it will be our secret.”

“I’m not sure, I really shouldn’t.”

“You know it makes sense,” Silus said. Reluctantly Canon agreed and followed him into the pub. Denos, Celus and a multitude of others were already there. It was a very tense atmosphere for the drink had made them aggressive. Celus was speaking as they entered. “I will be no man’s slave I will die sword in hand first. Why do our Gods put us through this? What have we done to deserve this?”

“Well this man should know,” Danu a fisherman said on seeing Canon, “Is it not his job to.”

Seeing them all about to turn on Canon Silus came to his aid, “That is the job of our Priests, not his.”

“We ought to go and see them,” Celus said, “They have got fat on our labour for long enough. At least now they might prove useful.”

“We wouldn’t even get close,” Silus said, “Their guards will see to that. Besides I think they have already made their position clear. Were it not they that had treacherous dealings with our enemy?”

“That’s true,” Danu said, “Was not Phal killed for his treachery?”

“Nest of rats,” Denos said, “And yet guards, paid for by us, protect them from us. I think that we are fools.”

“Well no more,” Celos said, “I say we march on them and find out what they have actually done.”

“Yes,” Denos said, “And let no guard stand in our way.” That was the mood of most of the people and three quarters of them left the pub and made their way to the temple

gathering strength on the way. Silus was going to join them but Canon pulled him back “It is not wise Silus,” he said, “There is to be bloodshed and looking at the crowd mass bloodshed. This whole city could go up soon if they are not contained so the Governor will have to be particularly brutal to put them in their place and send a warning out to others.”

“Yes, I was not thinking.”

“I don’t think it would be wise to be in a pub at the moment they will all be a hot bed of rebellion for the drink seems to bring that out in a man in times like these.”

“Judging by that I think you are right.”

“Go home and secure it in case they take to looting, that is the best advice I could give and one I’ll be taking myself.”

“You are a wise man and tomorrow I will get all my things ready and await our departure. I’ll not go back to the temple any more as it would just be a waste of time.”

“It might not even be standing,” Canon said with a laugh and they both headed for home.

The crowd only got to the temples perimeter when they were stopped by a mass of guards. The Governor had doubled the guard on all administrative buildings for fear of looting, his only act since the discovery of Ur’s fall.

“What is this?” Denos said angrily on seeing them, “They should be protecting us from the Elamites, that is what we pay them for. Cowards, it is the Elamites at Ur you should be up against,”

A murmur swept across the crowd and more chants of cowards and traitors came from them. The Captain of the Guard shouted, “Go home. There is nothing here for you. If you do not disband you will force me to take immediate action.”

“Immediate action,” Denos shouted, “Like you should have done at Ur you cowardly dogs. No, instead you protect traitors from getting their just reward. How can you sleep at night?”

“This is your last warning,” the Captain shouted, “If you do not vacate the area at once then my archers will be forced to unleash their arrows on you.”

“We want to see the High Priest,” Denos said thinking that they would not fire, “We will not leave until we have.”

“Arrest that man,” the Captain said and 3 guards made their way towards Denos. On seeing the crowd make way for them Denos slipped further into the crowd and disappeared from sight. The crowd filtered away, still resentful but not stern hearted enough to take it any further.

Canon was back in conversation with Bruga whilst all this was happening,

“So I hear you got on quite well with Canus,” Bruga said without greeting, “He is indeed a wise man.”

“I won’t disagree with that he certainly told me a thing or two so these stories then? How is it we lost their true meaning?”

“Time and Man’s greed, he over rationalised them and turned them to his wants I am afraid that everything you built your life around was false my friend. Canus though he will guide you.”

“You have a lot of time for him I’ve noticed that.”

“When you talk to him about these matters you are actually talking to me for as he is humble I can live and work through him.”

“Sorry, how does that work?”

“He has defeated his shadow self. Where he once lived now I can.”

“And if I was humble?”

“Then I could live in you but fear not because you would not be aware of me. I would just be another thought inside your head.”

“I was going to say and Canus, does he know that you live in him?”

“No,” Bruga said with a laugh, “But he knows me as common sense so he is aware of my presence although not me.”

“So when I have common sense I will know that you are within me. So er, what is common sense?”

“Common sense is the Earth Mothers art, it was put in place to aid Man in his basic survival days. It is a sense of inner knowing that tells you the best and safest way to do things and comes from the race memory, a common sense of purpose. When Man was more at one with his environment he used it more. Basically I guess you would say it was refined animal instinct.”

“Right and when I lose my pride I will get it?”

“Yes it is all within you it is just that your pride blocks it out that’s all. When you lose it you have an open channel to your race memory.”

“And how do I lose my pride for after what you have said it seems to be quite a handicap.”

“You’re doing it already by becoming aware of nature and your place in the scheme of things and less aware of yourself as a personal entity. You have destroyed the ivory tower that you used to live in so you’re pretty close.”

“My ivory tower?”

“The truths that you built your life around these are what made you proud. Without these you may be truly humble.”

“I’ll bare that in mind.”

“I see you nearly ended up in the pub again not a safe place to be at the present moment.”

“Yes,” Canon said sheepishly, “I got waylaid. But I do know what you mean about being dangerous. I don’t think I’ll be visiting again.”

“Good man with drink you could find yourself easily embroiled and the mood of your people, well you saw it yourself.”

“So what happened in the end then? Did they ever manage to talk to the Priests?”

“Couldn’t get near, the guards have been doubled. It could have been quite a stand off.”

“Could have been so what actually happened?”

“They did not have the will this time but it has not been forgotten and I would say that if it happens again they will be a lot better prepared. You mentioned going in a couple of days?”

“Yes I thought I would save hanging around. Silus is to come and I have asked Canus.”

“Wise move I see major civil unrest ahead. It does not do to hang around when that is about as you might lose your boat. I would hide it well tomorrow and be packed and ready to go.”

“Good thinking as soon as I have found out what Canus is doing I will be ready to leave. If Silus has any sense he should have packed last night so that should save time.”

“Good you have quite a day ahead of you tomorrow,” and disappeared.

Canon woke up and started packing immediately. He left most of his possessions deeming them unnecessary and that they would take up valuable space so it did not take

too long. As he was finishing he was interrupted by a loud knock on the door. He opened it to find Silus. "Did you hear the latest?" he said coming in, "They have put a curfew on the city and no one is allowed out after dark."

"Drastic are they trying to provoke the crowd?"

"Well it doesn't seem to have worked there is not a soul about and its broad daylight. I have heard that some have took to the hills although not enough to make that sort of difference."

"These are strange times are you packed?"

"Ah that is what I have come to see you about. There has been a change of plan."

"A change? You were all for it last night."

"Well I talked it over with my family and we decided to stay. I thought I would let you know so you are not waiting around."

"So why the change then? If you don't mind me asking for you seemed keen before."

"Yes sure, we feel that we would be better off taking our chances with the next lot. We could be going out of the cooking pan and into the fire. We don't really know what the Indus people are like we only trade with them. They might see our plight and take advantage."

"Sorry, take advantage?"

"Make us their slaves the same as the Egyptians, they are not of our people."

"So you plan to stay then well it's your decision I guess."

"Things might not be that bad with Ibbisin's capture Ishbi Erra might come to our aid."

"Well it would be in his interests I suppose," Canon said not really believing.

"My thoughts exactly, he would then be the Over King of a greater Empire and so strong enough to drive out the Elamites. Yes I think Ibbisin's capture was a good thing to happen."

"Well if you have made your decision, I will miss you Silus for you have been good company."

"Not at all come back in a couple of Moons when all this is over and I will still be here."

"Fair enough" Canon said and bid him good bye knowing that he would never see him again. Not long after Silus departed Canus made his appearance.

"Bad news I'm afraid we have decided to stay and see what we can make of the new situation."

"I'm sorry to hear that but I think that you are probably wise."

"We have built our life around the land, it will be a shame to have to leave it but it would be more of a shame if we left it of our own free will. No who knows the next lot might find us useful. Well that's what we are hoping for anyway so I am sorry once again."

"You must do what you think best but I would say that your skills as a farmer will come in useful. The Amorites are nomads and so know little about agriculture."

"My thoughts exactly and they would not cut of their noses to spite their faces."

"Silus thinks that Ishbi Erra will save them but I can't see it myself. He has too much trouble of his own to contend with."

"He's clutching at water I'm afraid there is more chance of one of his Gods coming down from heaven to help him."

"Yes," Canon said with a laugh, "I think that you are right. He should be pretty safe though shouldn't he? I mean they will quickly find a use for him."

"Hopefully, and what of you Canon are you still going or have you had a change of

heart?"

"There is nothing for me here even without the threat of invasion I think I would have moved."

"Sorry? I did not realise you were unhappy here."

"It is only just a recent thing, it was what you said that made me feel this way actually."

"Me, I did not mean to offend you."

"Oh no," Canon said with a laugh, "About the Gods and what the stories actually meant. I have made my life with morons and not just morons, treacherous morons to boot."

"It is only their ignorance don't let that drive you away. You do not have to live in their perceived world, only pretend to."

"Is that what you do?"

"Yes, I find that it gets me through life easier, you can pay lip service, and it is just empty words at the end of the day. No, my own real problem is coping with their greed, it can be very taxing."

"I'll say and it must be all the more galling for you than most for you know it all to be a pack of lies."

"I give them as little as I can get away with," Canus said with a laugh, "I like to think that I am doing them a favour by that."

"You do?" Canon said in surprise.

"Yes I like to think that it curbs their greed. It probably doesn't but if works for me."

"You're a good man and I will miss you."

"So you are definitely going."

"I think I need a complete new start, everything. Hopefully I will find my peace with the Indus."

"I have heard that they are a good people. Come back in a couple of years when everything has calmed and look me up," and with that they parted for the last time. Canon decided that as he was ready to go he may as well go there and then. He gathered his things and travelled the quiet city streets until he got to where his boat was moored. He loaded up and left the city without regret for the last time. He sailed down river and right at the fork and gingerly made his way past Ur. He crossed the Great Lake and rejoined the river again where turning left he hugged the coast until eventually he came to the land of the Indus.

## 2. Christian's Tale

The elemental wheel turned a click and the age of fire turned to water. Great civilisations grew and fell with others taking their place. Sumers, Akkadians, Assyrians, Kassites, Chaldeans, Babylonians rose from Mesopotamia either home grown from the area or brought in by invaders. They in turn influenced others the Egyptians, the Hittites, the Elamites, the Hebrews, the Persians. Other areas came to the fore, the Greeks, Etruscans and finally the Romans. The stories were rewritten by scholars who thought they were more artistic than the originators, more knowledge lost through man's vanity. Holy men came to the fore to try and put men back on path but the time of the many Gods was at an end for there only was room for one God. The tale I now relate is set long before Christianity became Rome's state religion, in fact it was pretty much in its infancy. It was a disorganised mish mash of ideas that had not quite been harmonised but it was strong enough to leave a deep impression on its followers' one that took away the fear of death for many which at the time of this tale was quite a boon. The Earth Mother had fallen from Man's favour although she was worshipped later under a different form and the object of their worship was something so great it was unknowable and well beyond their imagination's limited scope, God. The single God idea was not theirs solely for they were actually a split from an earlier idea (Judaism) that had fell slightly to decadence and ritualised service. In much the same way that Martin Luther pinned his articles of faith on the church door its leader Jesus Christ threw the money lenders out of the temple and a new order came to be. (The idea of a single God had also surfaced in Egypt for awhile and Persia under Zoroaster). Now although the Christians had no fear of death it appears they had one of circumcision and as it was starting to appeal to the gentile more than the Jew this had raised quite a problem. The early church (A collection of widespread communities that kept in touch through letters and personal visits) was not set in stone but lived in the hearts of those involved They still tried to preach in the synagogues, in their minds to try and redeem it, but with a sizeable proportion of gentiles now behind them they were seen as traitors to the chosen people and so threw out more often than not. The old order feared their influence seeing it a threat to their survival but also their power for they could heal and speak in many tongues. The new order felt sorry for the old thinking that their ignorance was depriving them of eternal life and it was only through the spirit of Jesus Christ that you could get it. The early churches were a hotbed of intellectualism and regularly debated on the Prophet's true message and their humble lifestyle meant the Holy Ghost was never out of their reach. Persecutions aside it was a good time, a time of inner peace where the whole community pooled their resources and lived in relative harmony with each other. This brought them well being and they lived without fear of death for they just saw it as casting off their sinful carnal body and taking up their spiritual body and going on to a life eternal by their loving father's side. So to put it in lay man's terms the spirit of Jesus Christ was the Word of God and through this Man transformed or fed his soul. They called this transformation the Holy Spirit for they could feel it at its work. Its parallel in the East was the Dharma and the Word of God enlightenment. So onto the tale itself, it is centred around a hostelry, a travellers rest, outside Rome and the lives of three different men. Maximus, an ex soldier, the owner of the place, Benjamin, a travelling business man and Timothy, a farm labourer and citizen of the Empire. Now Maximus was of the old school well travelled and wise. He had seen different faiths and he was very tolerant to them all believing that the money they brought



in far outweighed the potential for trouble that they could brew. Benjamin was a Jew of the old school. He saw himself as a representative of the chosen race and Christianity a bastardisation of a false prophet nailed like a common criminal for sedition. He believed that they would recognise their error and come back to the fold and so was very much against gentiles seeing them as poison to his pure blood. Timothy was Maximus' brother and a recent convert to Christianity. A labourer he supplemented his meagre income by helping out around the hostelry. The tale begins in the bar and Benjamin greeting Timothy, "Ah my false Jew, I've travelled far in this Godless country. Wine and victuals if you please."

"I am a Roman my friend," Timothy said, "I do not aspire to be a Jew."

"I have noticed that you do not burn incense in front of the Emperor's statue I thought that all Romans did?"

"No more," Maximus said, "I am getting tired of your constant bickering. You are both wrong."

"What?" Benjamin and Timothy both said together.

"Well let's be honest look at Genesis for a start. God told Adam and Eve not to eat the apple from the Tree of Knowledge didn't he?"

"Well yes," Benjamin said, "And your point?"

"Before they had eaten the apple they did not even have the sense to know that they were naked," Maximus said, "However were they supposed to understand him?"

"Well er. It's only symbolic," Benjamin said, "It means something else."

"Sure," Maximus said, "So what does it actually mean then for according to your legends wasn't that Original Sin?"

"I would need to ask an elder about that," Benjamin said, "I have never thought about it that way before."

"And you," Maximus said to Timothy, "What do you say about it?"

"No relevance to me," Timothy said, "Jesus came to rid us of that."

"I thought that he died on the cross to free you from that," Maximus said, "Are you saying he died for nothing?"

"No," Timothy said, "He died so through him we might live."

"Yes," Maximus said, "By wiping away the Original Sin that caused you to die in the first place. You are holding back half the story Timothy. When you can answer that to my satisfaction then you may continue your bickering but until then I do not want to hear another word from you."

Duly chastened the night wore on peacefully which was unusual as it was a pretty raucous place and Timothy retired to bed with that thought on his mind. He found himself face to face with Dina which was quite a shock to him. "Who are you?" Timothy said, "What do you want from me?"

Dina's strange features made Timothy think he might be Satan though he was reluctant to ask him that.

"You have some doubt," Dina said "I have come to dispel it."

"You are not Satan are you? I have heard that he gets strength from doubt."

"No I am an elemental, a Spirit of Nature. I am here to help you so that you might understand Genesis."

"You are? Are you the Holy Spirit?"

"No that's hoc," Dina said (in the alphabet of symbols the letters hoc stand for spirit

seeing will), “No it appears you are starting to have misgivings.”

“Yes, it does not make sense, well unless it is symbolic.”

“It is both symbolic and literal you will have to pay heed for it can be very confusing.”

“It sounds it so what is it all about?”

“Man’s evolution and history, when Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden Man was just like all the other animals. He was controlled by his instinct and so had no will of his own.”

“Would that be why he did not realise he was naked? He had not the sense.”

“Well it was more to do with the fact he was not self conscious. He was like the other animals then and not ashamed of his nakedness. Adam and Eve were the masculine and feminine forces inside us and the serpent the spiritual force and spur to their evolution.”

“So he was not evil then?”

“Only misunderstood,” Dina said with a laugh, “Now by the fact that he told Eve first it means that it came from Man’s understanding, his feminine force and is actually the spirit of understanding one of the seven spirits of Creation.”

“Seven spirits, I have heard something about that but I thought it was to do with God.”

“Is God not Creation? But you will have to excuse me for I do not keep up with your terms and fashions.”

“Well I suppose he is now that you put it in those terms and these spirits, may I ask you what they are?”

“Sure, nothing is hidden, mind you, you will have to pay close attention for it will be even more complicated.”

“Fair enough.”

“Adam is the spirit of life, Eve is the spirit of love at this level of existence it is a being with the basic ability to reproduce, basic flora.”

“Are you trying to say that he was a flower?”

“No,” Dina said with a laugh, “That is just how the story was weaved together. When they met up with the snake it meant that Man evolved some knowing and through this he ate the apple and got discernment. Before he had discernment though the level of understanding he actually had was not more than any other animal so he was controlled by the Earth Mothers laws, his instinct. He evolved out of that and so had to leave the Garden symbolic of instinctive living. This was natural evolution though, no crime was committed.”

“So what about being cursed to die, I thought that was because he ate the apple?”

“No, that is just the story. Man, like all animals is cursed to die. The difference between them though is that man can eat of the Tree of Life and get eternal youth. When man left Eden he left with a purpose and that was to till the land and tend the Earth. If he had transgressed your God surely he would not have got a purpose. That is a blessing not a curse.”

“Oh yes I see your point but I think that a lot of people would consider it a curse.”

“Then they are misguided but that is Genesis and the Garden of Eden sorted. Would you like me to continue?”

“Yes sure, I’m intrigued.”

“Well when Man left the garden he was not alone there was another type of Man that went with him.”

“Really was that your race?”

“No but it runs through my blood like it does yours. Man killed the more advanced race though some did mate and from it you got Original Sin.”

“Because of the killing?”

“Well in a way Cain was the spirit of wisdom and Abel the spirit of purpose. If they had merged properly their evolution would have been quickly completed. Man would have had wisdom but he would also have had a purpose. He would have been equipped to tend the land and so evolved in balance. Abel’s blood ran through him but not enough to make a difference so basically Man went against his purpose and that was the Original Sin.”

“Right.”

“Now the remnants of Abel mixed with a smattering of Cain survived and re-grew in strength. They became our people or Seth and after more bloodshed we did manage to merge and become one race.”

“So the sons of Adam and Eve were actually races of men yes, I can see some sense in that.”

“Good, well that will give you something to think about,” and disappeared.

Timothy woke up restless and a little confused. The things he had heard made sense but the implications of it meant that all his belief in Genesis had been misplaced and that he could not accept. He decided to destroy the messenger instead and so Dina became Satan and his message just a lie to destroy his faith. That was why he did not perceive the snake as evil he reasoned to himself, he was the snake. With this in mind things got a lot clearer. He was trying to create mischief that was all and Timothy had nearly fallen for it. With this in mind he started the day with a new heart. He was content that Satan had not fooled him and vowed that he would not let him. It was a test of faith by his God that was all and he had passed for he had not fallen for it. As he started the day in the field he was content and the day passed quickly for him which was just as well as the pay was low and the work was hard. (A downside to the Empire was that the goods were cheaper and the local farmers could not compete with them making farming virtually impossible. Many farmers had left the land and moved to Rome in search of better living only to find themselves on the dole for there was little work there also. The dole was not a state run institution but a personal agreement with a richer man called a patron. It involved the client, or unemployed man, going around the patron’s house every morning to pay his respects and collect his dole but the patron might also offer other benefits such as protection in lawsuits and maybe even make a contribution to the client’s daughter’s dowry. In return for this the patron received the client’s political support and an open show of loyalty and respect every time they met. The vast unemployed population in Rome was a constant threat to its security and free bread was often distributed to try and pacify their hunger while festivities of gladiatorial combat, chariot racing and fighting animals were there to divert their time.)

Early evening saw Timothy back at the hostelry and engrossed in his work. Maximus asked him if he had got any further with Original Sin.

“It was not for eating the apple,” Timothy said, “No, it was when Cain killed Abel Man got it.”

“I can’t believe that, are you trying to say that Man was cursed just because one man killed another? No it does not make sense.”

“Maybe it was the actual act of killing, maybe it was a boundary line that could not be crossed?”

“No, look at Rome for a start. We have built our Empire on other men's blood and we are doing well. If you perceive that as being cursed well I'm afraid that you've been misled.”

“But how do you know that you aren't cursed maybe you have yet to be judged?”

“Oh the return, do you really believe that Timothy. I mean let's be honest he's been crucified. He's dead.”

“No, he rose from the dead; we have witnesses to that fact.”

“Now Timothy I don't know what this cult you belong to is up to but I can quite assure you that when you are dead you are dead. I mean I should know shouldn't I? I've killed many men and I swear by Jupiter himself that not one of them got up.”

“Yes but he was the Son of God that was nothing to him.”

“Are not our Emperors the sons of Gods? To the best of my knowledge not one of them has returned from the dead.”

“No, no I mean the real Son of God.”

“Timothy I am a realist and you are an idealist. Take my advice and never say that again. That is sedition and you would get killed if the wrong people heard it.”

“I don't fear death in fact I see it as a blessing.”

“That cult of yours has got a lot to answer for, its message is poison. I rue the day that you ever got in with them. You'll end up like the rest of them, lion food. You know their trouble, their intolerant.”

“No, I disagree they are very open minded people.”

“They preach that just they have the truth and everything else is false. I would not say that was open-minded. No they are arrogant and Rome has a way of dealing with arrogance. He may have been the Son of God to you but he was just a common criminal that died on the cross.”

“Yes but he rose again they could not find the body so that proves it.”

“Behave; it was stolen by his so called disciples.”

“How can that be? It was well guarded.”

“Easily bought off if there were any I cannot see it myself for why would they want to put a guard on a common criminal's body but money would be no trouble to them after all they con all their members.”

“No, they pool their resources that's completely different.”

“Yes right,” Maximus said with a laugh and then, “Look sharp we have a Nobile to attend to. You don't see many of them around here.”

(Slaves excluded, Roman society was divided into 3 classes. The Nobiles, the Equestrians and the Plebeians. The Nobiles were the old patriarchs although it did include a few influential Plebeians they were the hereditary office holders. The Equestrians or knights were mainly business men and the rest were called Plebeians. Some were citizens while others freemen and liberated slaves without full rights of citizenship. The Nobiles as with other well to do travellers rarely stopped in hostelries considering them uncomfortable, dirty and the hang out of thieves and robbers. Generally they would either sleep in their carriage or pitch a tent by the roadside or stop at friends if they were lucky. A whole social system had evolved called hospitium or guest friendship. This was a form of lodge membership whose members were obliged to afford one another protection and hospitality along the road.) Timothy turned to see a regal looking man with 5 attendants entering the place. One of the attendants came over and said, “You are in the presence of Anthony Tullius Laxius and he requires solitude and the best victuals at your disposal. If

your establishment is not up to supplying a suitable standard you must tell me now and so save time and his disappointment.”

“We are a humble place and we serve humble fare,” Maximus said, “But it is good and it is wholesome for that is the standard we go by. Whether it is a suitable standard for your master though, well I cannot answer that for I do not know what his standards are.

Though if it is the same Anthony Tullius Laxius that I served under in the 5<sup>th</sup> legion I would say he’d be content.”

“You dare presume to know him,” the man said sharply.

“I am a free man and I will not be talked to like that by a slave,” Maximus said angrily, “What are you, Assyrian? My sword has dispatched many of your kind before so it will not be a precedence.”

“You dare threaten,” the attendant said but was interrupted, “What’s going on?” it was Anthony and then, “Maximus is that you?”

“My lord,” Maximus said, “I apologise for I did not recognise you.”

“And I could not blame you I am afraid that affairs of state have aged me somewhat.

How I wish for the nostalgia of a sword in my hand and fighting an enemy who was open and honest. You have not changed though and I see that your temper could quick ignite still. You’ll have to excuse him for his sheltered life has kept him away from free men.”

“You are welcome and all that you eat and drink will be given freely and if I might make so bold, may I join you for I am in need of news.”

“Yes although I came here for solitude now I have seen you again that idea has lost its appeal. Let us talk of old times, when youth was on our side and we knew where we stood.”

“My pleasure,” Maximus said and Anthony and his retinue was served. Maximus joined them and they talked long into the night about battles all won and women all bedded.

Timothy joined them and Anthony was introduced to Maximus’ brother.

“Yes,” Anthony said, “I can see it now you tell me, especially around the eyes. So did you never think of army life?”

“No,” Maximus said before Timothy could answer, “He has always been a farmer for he likes the land.”

“A noble profession,” Anthony said, “Albeit a poor one. Yes, they say that we were all farmers once; sometimes our greatness has its drawbacks but what of the city? I am sure that a strong man like you would make something of himself have you never been tempted?”

“The thought had crossed my mind,” Timothy said, “But I have heard there was no work and most of the dwellings are prone to collapse.”

“Yes I am afraid that greed has a lot to answer for. A lot of shoddy apartments have been erected with cheapness in mind. That need not concern you though for I could quickly find you a good place. It happens that I am in need of a gardener as a matter of fact.”

“Well I am not sure,” Timothy said and then to Maximus, “What do you think?”

“It’s up to you.”

“I can see you have a lot to discuss,” Anthony said getting up, “I am camped outside so tell me your answer in the morning,” and bid them good bye.

“Well what do you think then?” Timothy said, “The capital of the world, it will be quite an adventure.”

“It would, it would certainly make a man of you. Careful of the people though, they are a

lot different to us. They say sharper but I say devious. Keep your wits about you and for Jupiter's sake don't tell anyone you are a Christian."

"Why not I hear that they have a vibrant community there, that's one of the reasons I want to go. Yes it is a hive of activity, they have their secret signs and hold secret meetings yes it should be fun."

"I don't believe I am hearing this, fun you say. They meet in secret through fear, nothing else. It's no game. You could easily end up dead. Alright I have heard it is a bit quiet at the moment but that is only at the Emperor's whim. His mind could change just like that, he even turned on his mother so I would not trust him. If its Christianity you want to believe in then you are better off here and out of harm's way."

"There's nothing here for me. I long to be with my Christian brothers, sharing everything and listening to the words of our elders."

"Am I not your brother, have I not carved a good life for us here?"

"Yes you have done me well and I will be forever grateful but this thing is big, I can feel it. It is a whole new existence, one of sharing and not greed."

"That is only because you are left with nothing. You'll have no greed because you will have nothing to be greedy with."

"No it's not like that, not like that at all. Seriously this is a big thing and I want to be a part of it. We are talking about a new world order here."

"There you go again," Maximus said angrily, "You spout that crap in Rome and you will not last 5 minutes. Think before you speak."

"I know, I'll keep that quiet. It is only you I talk to as a brother; it is not for the ears of strangers."

"I hope so otherwise I fear I would be sending you to your death. Now I will let you go as long as you promise to be quiet about your beliefs and though I cannot forbid you to mix with these people I hope you have sense to see reason soon and shun them."

"You'll have my promise on the first part but as for the second no that will never happen."

"Time will tell it will certainly be a struggle when you have gone but if you keep that promise you are destined for greater things so I don't mind."

"Then it is agreed, I am to be a gardener in the household of Anthony Tullius Laxius. Yes, it sounds a noble profession."

"Then it must be time to retire for you will need your sleep and will have to get up early to pack tomorrow," Maximus said and they both went to their beds.

Timothy found himself with Dina again, who was not too happy. "What is this," he said without greeting him, "You think that I am something called Satan?"

"Well you are but now I am wise to you."

"If you are so wise then perhaps you might tell me what Genesis is about I would love to hear your version."

"Satan works in ignorance if I knew what it was about then you would not be here."

"What kind of answer is that? That is stupidity beyond belief. I have hidden nothing from you."

"Maybe but it's all a load of lies. You cannot fool me Satan as I am wise to you."

"Then heaven help you if you go to the big city you will be easy prey to any conman."

"How do you know that I am going to the big city, see you must be Satan and what do you mean if? I am leaving for it tomorrow so there is no if about it."

“If you had any sense you would avoid it, it is not a safe place to be at the moment.”

“Now I will definitely go because now that you have said that I know it must be God’s will.”

“What?” Dina said in surprise.

“You are Satan so anything you say I will just do the opposite and know that it is God’s will. You talk of Genesis and I hold my hand up in ignorance about it but in Rome I will find my answer. There are a lot wiser men there who will know the answer. No I will find out what Genesis means and you will have no more hold on me.”

“That’s what I have been trying to do as soon as I impart my knowledge I will be free to go.”

“I will not listen you will just be wasting your time.”

“Have it your own way,” Dina said and disappeared.

## **Chapter 2**

Timothy woke and quickly packed. He said his goodbyes to Maximus and promised to see him again as soon as he could. He joined Anthony's retinue and made the slow journey back to Rome. He got into conversation with the Assyrian his brother had argued with. “So your first time in Rome,” he said, “My name is Ebbi and I will show you around and teach us of our ways.”

“Thank you,” Timothy said, “I am Timothy and I much appreciate that. Tell me, have you ever been to Jerusalem?”

“Yes, it is a foul place and no mistake. They are a lawless people and rebellion is never far from their minds. We gave them civilisation and they just threw it in our face. No, it was a bad day when Rome took it under her wing.”

“Oh and what about all this talk of miracles. Did you see any when you were there?”

“No,” Ebbi said with a laugh, “I have heard talk of it but I have never seen it myself. I think it is just misguided talk by ignorant people,” and laughed again before saying, “There was even talk of someone coming back from the dead I mean I ask you.”

“I have heard the same don’t you think that it’s true then?”

“Well let’s face it if it was true he would have shown himself to the people. I mean let’s be really honest if you did come back you would not hide yourself away like that, you would go straight to the biggest audience about and show yourself.”

“I suppose so,” Timothy said not really knowing how to answer it.

“Sure they say that he appeared to some,” Ebbi said still in his flow, “The so called chosen few but I say if he can appear to one why not everyone. And why go back to whatever do they call it heaven afterwards. No it’s too suspicious to even contemplate. You might see some of these followers in Rome, they call themselves Christians. Watch them well for they prey on the weak minded and lonely. They’ll have what little money you have and just leave you with a glimmer of hope that this Jesus fellow will come back and make your life a little better.”

“Right I’ll bare that in mind.”

“You will do well, now onto Rome itself. The first thing I have to say is that it is big, and I mean very big. It is very easy to get lost. Most of the streets have no names and their houses are not identifiable either. The streets are generally narrow and crowded and full of filth and if you are wise you will not venture out after dark. I will show you around and in time it will come to you.”

“Yes I appreciate that.”

“You will do well here,” Ebbe said and told him more about the city and its ways. By the time they had got there Timothy was pretty well versed in it and as they entered he recognised some of the land marks described to him. It was nearly nightfall when they arrived back and so Timothy was shown a room and went straight to bed.

He found himself back with Dina. “You are wasting your time,” he said without greeting, “Anything you say will just be disregarded.”

“I will not go until my message is fully delivered and understood. The sooner the better as far as I am concerned.”

“It will not be delivered to me I will not accept it and even if I listen I will not believe it.”

“It is irrelevant to me whether you believe it or not my job is just to make sure you understand it.”

“I can understand it alright but as I know it to be a pack of lies is it worth understanding.”

“One moment,” Dina said and disappeared, he was back just as quickly, “Very well you force me into.”

To anyone wondering where he went I will now relate it.

“What am I to do with this mortal Great Mistress,” he said, “He’s got it in his mind that I’m some sort of evil presence. I cannot do anything with him for everything I say he thinks is a lie.”

“I know,” the Earth Mother said, “He is indeed a strange one. I fear that anything you say would just be wasted on him. What do you say hoc?”

“It appears you are right,” hoc said, “The way he is heading he will be dead in a couple of weeks anyway.”

“Sorry?” Dina said.

“He will get involved with the Christians who will be blamed for starting a fire,” hoc said, “I am afraid he will come to grief.”

“And if I warn him he is bound to do the opposite,” Dina said, “I mean how do you deal with that? The man is his own worst enemy.”

“We will have to get him by guile,” hoc said and went deep in thought. After awhile he said, “I will go in your place and you come after disguised as, I don’t know. What they perceive as good.”

“Fair enough,” Dina said and hoc disappeared. “Satan,” Dina said appearing as an angel, “I command you to leave this child of God and I cast you out in his name.” With that hoc disappeared and Timothy said, “I knew he was Satan, I told him he was wasting his time with me but he wouldn’t listen.”

“You have done well Timothy,” Dina said, “But we have been keeping an eye on you to make sure you did not come to harm.”

“Well I saw through his lies anyway, I didn’t believe a word of it.”

“Ah, all that he has told you up to date is true. That is how he works. He starts off with the truth so that you believe him and then he subtly throws in a few lies.”

“Oh right, yes I can see the truth in that. So all that he said about the Garden of Eden then, that was true.”

“Yes. He was just about to start his lies so we thought we’d intercede.”

“Let him do the work you mean. Yes I like it.”

“Good, now he took you as far as Seth if I remember rightly. He did not mention that he was the final spirit of creation, the spirit of understanding. It comes from the spirits of



wisdom Cain and purpose Abel. So you have life love understanding discernment wisdom purpose and knowing.”

“Right, he probably left that out deliberately.

“Maybe, so the children of Seth or men merged with the children of Cain or gods and from that union Man evolved to greatness though over time he lost his Godliness. The floods came and washed most of them away although this was not an act of God as God is love and not vindictive. No, this was a natural disaster that very few survived.”

“Oh and Noah, he did exist didn’t he?”

“Symbolic, all the genealogies in Genesis are actually codes for hidden wisdom.”

“Sorry?”

“Noah had 3 children. **Shem, Ham and Japheth** what they actually means is **‘From light seeing God’s spirit you get spiritual understanding through life, the spirit of God’s life and blessed with God’s spiritual word through spiritual wisdom.’**”

“I did not realise, so what about the Tower of Babel?”

“It just meant that Man fell to his pride again and so lost his understanding. All the knowledge was hidden away and that is how the mythologies came to be.”

“Yes and what about the rest?”

“That will be it for now. You will see a friend tomorrow.”

“I doubt it I don’t know anyone here.”

“Benjamin you may tell him what I have told you,” and disappeared.

Timothy woke up to an easy day. Anthony decided that he could have a few days off to acclimatise and so left Ebbe with that purpose. As they walked the narrow streets Ebbe said, “You must truly be blessed, there are not many men this would happen to. Did you say that your brother served under him?”

“Yes, Maximus has often mentioned the campaigns they were on. He has a lot of respect for him.”

“It appears the feeling is mutual. Yes, he must be a remarkable man your brother.”

“Timothy,” A voice said, “Is that you?”

Timothy turned to see Benjamin coming up to greet him, “Whatever are you doing here?”

“I live here now at the house of Anthony Tullius Laxius. I am to be his gardener. This is Ebbe, he too works there.”

“I must go,” Ebbe said, “You may stay with this man if you like. You know how to get home now,” and rushed off.

“What was that all about?”

“He’s a Christian. He knows that I know him to be one. I guess he doesn’t know that you are one.”

“I never knew I wouldn’t mind but he gave a pretty good argument against it to me yesterday.”

“He’s a very clever man but I fear he lacks the courage for his convictions. This is a dangerous place for Christians Timothy It is not like where you come from. No seriously keep your head down.”

“Will you be going past my place soon?”

“Tomorrow should see me there my business here is nearly done.”

“Would you tell Maximus that you have seen me?”

“Sure have you any messages for him?”

Timothy thought awhile and said, “Yes, tell him that the Garden of Eden was only a

symbol of Man when he was like the rest of the animals. The actual Original Sin was when Man went against God's will and did not tend the land."

"Really, I see some sense in that. Where did you get it from?"

"An angel told me."

"Yes, you Christians reckon you are always seeing them," Benjamin said, Timothy's honesty putting a dampener on things.

"No it's true he also told me," and went on to relate everything he had been told. After he had finished Benjamin said, "Two races of Man indeed. I will tell your brother what you told me to but I would keep the rest of that to yourself if I were you. I will be in Rome next month, if you have a chance meet me here at the same time," and left him to have a look around.

"You want a game of chance mister?" a voice said interrupting his perusal.

"Sure," Timothy said, "What are we playing?"

"You bet," the man said but Timothy interrupted him, "I have no money to bet with."

"Then why are you wasting my time you ignorant rustic fool, go on get off. Let me talk to someone with money."

"But you stopped me."

"Are you still here, am I speaking too fast for you?"

"What's going on here," it was Ebbi returned from his errand, "Be off beggar and leave this man alone."

"Waste of time," the man muttered angrily to himself as he skulked off.

"You must be careful of people like that," Ebbi said, "They are not to be trusted. They will con what little money you have and still want more."

"Thank you Ebbi, Benjamin has told me that you are a Christian."

"He's a liar you must pay no heed to him."

"Why do you deny Our Lord I too am a Christian and did not Jesus say that you must not hide your light under a bushel."

"You must never mention that to anybody again do you hear me. My faith is a matter for me and me alone. It is not to be bandied around the market place for all to hear. And you my friend if I were you I would keep my beliefs to myself also for you never know whose listening."

"I'm confused if you were a true Christian surely you would not fear death but welcome it."

"Do not presume to judge me for you know nothing of my circumstances but you are right I do not fear death. I will say no more."

"Fair enough but I would ask a favour of you if I may."

"You may ask but I will not promise that I'll grant it."

"You must know of other Christians I was wondering if you would introduce me to them."

"If I were you I would not get involved, these are not good times for us you are better off away from it."

"Then you refuse me."

"I will introduce you but it was my duty to warn you of the danger first."

"Thank you."

"But first you must promise never to reveal to anyone else that I am a Christian for as I said my beliefs are personal to me and not for the ears of anyone else."

“Very well although I do not know why you are so reticent I will promise that I will tell no one.”

“Good, follow me and I will show you to the baker,” and took him down a warren of streets until he came to a shop.

“Ebbi,” the man said greeting him, “Peace be with you.”

“And also with you my friend I have with me a believer. This is Timothy I was wondering if you would introduce him to the community?”

“Sure, you have not been to the gatherings for a while. You know that you are always welcome.”

“You know my reasons so we shall say no more on the matter.”

“Well you are sadly missed,” the man said and turning to Timothy, “I have not seen you before.”

“I am new to the city.”

“I will show you around then, when you talk of me you must call me the baker for you never know who might be listening. That is how we live at the moment but fear not it will not always be like that. When Our Lord comes back, then we will walk tall once again.”

“Now, now, you must not be filling this young lad’s head full of poison.”

“You must excuse him he has not the strength of faith in Our Lord.”

“I do not believe in superstition.”

“You do not even believe that he rose from the dead you have no faith at all.”

“I have faith in his words I do not need to believe in mysticism to know that this man was a prophet.”

“He was the Son of God do you deny even that?”

“No but so are you and I and Timothy here. Are we all not Gods children made in his image?”

“Yes but this man was more.”

“He was a prophet, a messenger from God. You do not worship prophets but you listen to what they have to say and use it to guide your life. Believe me I have the up-most respect for Jesus Christ but I say that his word stands on its own and does not need mysticism to support it.”

“Well you lead a good life so who am I to argue, you know that there is always a place for you anyway.”

“My thanks you too are a good man,” and turning to Timothy, “You may stay with him a while if he doesn’t mind. I have a couple of errands to run but I will be back within the hour.”

“Would that be alright,” Timothy said to the baker who agreed so Ebbi left them. After he had gone Timothy said, “So are there many others?”

“A few but we grow more by the day. You must come to our gathering tonight; you will meet them all then.”

“I will try but I am not sure that I can get away.”

“Well if you are here before night fall I will take you to it otherwise I fear that you won’t find it.”

“Then I will definitely try so how often do you meet?”

“We meet 3 times a week but always at different houses for we take it in turn to host.”

“And you must believe that Jesus will return soon.”

“In my lifetime for that was his promise. Peter has told me that himself.”

“You have met Peter? That must have truly been an honour. To meet somebody that actually knew Our Lord.”

“I am truly blessed but you can meet him tonight too.”

“He will be there tonight?”

“Yes, he sees us quite regularly though so if you can’t make it there will be other occasions.”

“No, tonight it will be. Now that you have told me that I don’t think I can wait even to then.”

“Ah here’s Ebbi,” the baker said, “Time flies in good conversation,” and Timothy went back with Ebbi.

“He asked me to come to the meeting tonight,” Timothy said, “Peter will be there himself. Do you think I’ll be able to go?”

“Is that wise Rome is not a safe place to be at night.”

“I will be alright the baker said he would take me,”

“Well I’ll take you as far as the bakers then, you must get him to take you back but not to worry as it’s on his way.”

“And you, will you not come as well?”

“No I will not come,” Ebbi said and said no more. Timothy was persistent though, “But Peter will be there.”

“I have met Peter many times now let us say no more about it as we are home.”

Timothy spent the rest of the day in the garden, not really doing anything as there was very little to do. He was joined later by Ebbi who gave him a hand for he was short of a purpose. As they worked together Ebbi must have thought that he needed to justify himself because he said, “I do not go to the gatherings because my version of faith is not the same as theirs. Besides they are always arguing about trivial things.”

“Sorry, what like?”

“Well circumcision for a start most of them still want to keep it elitist. You’re a gentile; you must have come across it before.”

“Ah. Most of what I know comes from travellers that have stayed at Maximus.’ They have not mentioned anything like that.”

“So you have quite a limited view then. Have you been baptised by the way?”

“No I’ve never met anyone who would do it.”

“They will sort that out tell them when you get there.”

“Fine so what are your views, if you don’t mind me asking for I know you said they were personal to you.”

“Very well I believe that the Word of God feeds the Soul through transformation by the Holy Spirit. This transformation changes us from carnal animals into spiritual beings although we are still incarnate. I also believe that this might take more than one lifetime and we are destined to come back until it does.”

“Really er, that doesn’t sound Christian to me.”

“I don’t call it that I just follow Jesus’ words of love thy neighbour and lead a selfless live. It is other people that lay that charge on me. I went a few times but they seem stuck on minor points and sorcery.”

“Sorcery?”

“Well what else would you call a miracle. No to me they are just as bad as the people they accuse.”

“I don’t know about that they do it in Our Lord’s name while the others do it in the devils.”

“Magick is magick, no matter how you define it, that leads to blind faith. You do not transform through blind faith you transform through the Word of God, rational faith.”

“But surely it attracts people to the Word that can be no bad thing.”

“There is that but it attracts most of them for the wrong reason. They just want the power and are not too bothered about the understanding.”

“But doesn’t it also take away the fear of death I mean with power like that at your disposal surely that means there is more to life than reality.”

“No,” Ebbe said with a laugh, “It is the belief in an afterlife that takes away the fear of death. You get that through the Word of God for that is what gives you the belief.”

“Oh I did not realise. All those people ever told me was about the miracles, I just thought.”

“No it goes a lot deeper than that. It’s all to do with levels of understanding and knowing what you are in essence.”

“I have heard of levels of understanding.”

“You have that’s surprising as they don’t mention it,” (It had to be sent later, encoded in the angel chants of the Koran.)

“No an angel told me.”

“You talk to angels surely that is better than any miracle. So what did he tell you about them?”

“Not a lot really he mentioned the first three that was all.”

“Well that’s not bad going basically they are the stages that the Soul must go through to reach fruition. To truly understand them you need to know about the seven spirits of God.”

“He mentioned that except that he called them the seven spirits of Creation.”

“Right that should save some time. Did he happen to tell you what they were?”

“Yes.” Timothy said and thought awhile before saying. “Life, love, understanding, insight, wisdom, knowing and purpose.”

“Good and in the right order too now the spirit of purpose is the Lord God for that is what you serve.”

“Right.”

“And the levels run like this. The first level is the mergence of two spirits, life and love. This basically is a being with the ability to recreate itself. Flora and basic fauna.”

“That’s what he said the only thing is I would not say that a flower has life as such.”

“Everything has a mind it’s just not refined as ours. There must be something inside a flower that makes it head towards the Sun.”

“Oh and a mountain, does that have life?”

“Yes but it has no love for it cannot recreate itself. It's part of a great mind, Mother Earth.”

“That’s paganistic.”

“I never said I was a Christian. I just follow the lifestyle because I believe it to be the best for me.”

“I suppose so. No, you are right in what you say but I do not believe that the Earth Mother exists so I’m afraid that will make me mistrust your words.”

“Fair enough I do not push my views on anyone” and then, "Look, what’s that in the

distance,” and pointed out to some black billowing smoke.

“It looks like a fire of some sort and judging by the smoke quite a big one.”

“I must tell Anthony with all that debris lying around it was an accident waiting to happen.”

“And judging by the proximity of the houses I would say that it will be hard to put out.”

“Anthony will know what to do,” Ebbi said and left to find him. His final parting words were, “The Christians will get the blame for this, mark my words.”

After he had gone Timothy awaited his return and looked towards the billowing smoke as it spread on its path of destruction.

### **Chapter 3**

When Anthony and Ebbi came back Anthony said, “Praise the Gods that the wind is behind us. Ebbi gather all the able bodied men in the household and we’ll go down and see if they can make use of us.”

Ebbi did as he was ordered and soon they were throwing river water over it.

“This is no use,” Anthony said, “It is not even making an impression on it. Where is the help, where is Nero?”

All night they continued but still the fire grew, well into the next day and still it was expanding. It was a tired Timothy that went to bed the following night. The fire was still on his mind when he met Dina disguised as an angel.

“So Genesis,” Dina said.

“Rome is aflame is this an act of God?”

“Only an act of someone who thinks he is, it is city clearance no more. God is not to blame although he will be.”

“Ebbi said that.”

“Then he is a wise man.”

“He is a pagan, he follows a false idol.”

“No my friend it is you that follows a false ideal. Did God not tell you to tend the Earth; you honour your father and yet dishonour your mother.”

“So the levels of understanding then,” Timothy said seeing sense.

“Level one you already know symbolised by Adam and Eve. Level two, this is another spirit, the spirit of understanding symbolised by the serpent an animal controlled by its instinct. Level three is where Adam ate the apple and got the spirit of discernment. This is Man at his most basic, he knows right from wrong. Accompanying insight you have the spirit of wisdom Cain, it means will (God blessed with light), he has free will.”

“Oh right.”

“Level five is the journey you are on at the moment symbolised by the descendants of Cain as it might happen over many lifetimes.”

“Reincarnation Ebbi said that.”

“Then he is a very wise man,” Dina said (reincarnation was dropped from the teachings)

“For that transformation he mentioned is the journey in its essence. Now level six is the mergence of wisdom and understanding or when Seth's offspring met up with Cains.”

“Seth, I thought it was the snake?”

“It means understanding (through spiritual wisdom) the more spiritual wisdom the more understanding. This mergence happens in a dream and levels seven and eight happen not long after it. The flood is symbolic of cleansing and spiritual rebirth and Noah, the spirit

of knowing that comes with rebirth. When you get to this stage you are an enlightened soul in need of a purpose to serve. Love, pride or anger. Chose love and go to level ten. This is symbolised in Genesis by Noah's three children. Shem is anger or righteous indignation which is a reaction when you understand life in a spiritual sense. Japheth is pride which you get through knowing the Word without understanding it and Ham is love for the spirit of Gods life is the spirit of purpose. Canaan stands for will of God, light of God, God's light and its purpose is to serve that is why they became servants. All is not what it seems."

"It sounds like it."

"Anyway that will keep you for awhile," Dina said and disappeared.

Timothy woke early next morning and was put on the fire virtually straight away. It had grown considerably but he was lucky as the wind was keeping it well away from Anthony's house hold. They worked hard but it was a pointless endeavour for they made no real impression on it. He did manage to see Ebbi to speak to though so he apologised to him for his disrespect to the Earth Mother and told him that the levels of understanding had been explained to him.

"Good," Ebbi said passing him a bucket, "You must always keep an open mind for the knowledge is hidden in many faiths."

"I'll bare that in mind," Timothy said passing the bucket further up the line, "You mentioned that we were something in essence?"

"Oh right," Ebbi said, "Yes we are evolving souls on the path of life. The path of life is the levels of understanding that you have to cross."

"And the angel said it might take many lifetimes. He mentioned reincarnation but I am having a little difficulty believing in it."

"Why is that then," Ebbi said passing him another bucket, "If you don't mind me asking."

"Well I don't remember my last life I mean I am guessing that I have been here before so surely I would know it."

"It is your essence that lives on, that is the only thing that is spiritual. Your carnal body along with you personality dies every time."

"Oh right."

"But it is good that you realise that you might have lived before. Without a belief in reincarnation you think that the birth of your ego was also your birth. This is a good foundation to nurture pride so reincarnation is a good thing to believe in."

"Well I'll have to take your word for it for I can't see me ever finding out for sure, well while I live that is."

"I may be able to help you," Ebbi said passing him a bucket.

"You could how?"

"I will show you later when we have finished our work here."

"That could be a long time we don't seem to be making much headway at all."

"I fear that the only way it will stop is when it has burned itself out and I think that a lot more of Rome will burn before it does."

"Well it's certainly burned a lot already this is indeed a bad time for Rome."

"And not just Rome."

"Do you still think they will blame the Christians for this?"

"Undoubtedly someone will be needed to blame and the Christians fit the bill."

"That angel told me it was started by someone who thought he was God but he also said

that we'd get the blame for it."

"Nero," Ebbi said in surprise, "You mean all this was started by Nero. Whatever for?"

"City clearance."

"I have heard that he is mad but I don't think he is that mad."

"Well my brother said that he killed his own mother so I guess with that in mind anything is possible."

"Maybe," Ebbi said and laughed before saying, "They say that he tried to kill her many times but without success. Yes, he is an accident waiting to happen."

They worked on until late into the night before returning home to a meal and a rest. After they had eaten Timothy said, "You mentioned something about finding out about reincarnation for sure."

"Well it does not work for everyone but I will give it a go if you like. Just close your eyes and see if you can picture a stone stair case."

Timothy did as he was told and said, "Yes, I can see one."

"Good now climb up the steps and feel yourself getting lighter with every step that you take. Tell me when you reach the top."

"I am at the top," Timothy said after a couple of seconds.

"Good now turn to the right and tell me what you see."

"I see a long corridor with doors on either side and one at the bottom."

"Well go down the corridor and tell me when you have got to the end."

After a couple of seconds Timothy said, "I am by the door."

"Open it and tell me what you see."

"I see a library, there are books everywhere."

"Alright now look around the room and tell me if you can see a mirror."

"Yes."

"Good now go over to the mirror and look into it and tell me what you see."

"I see the devil," Timothy said getting slightly agitated.

"Don't worry, just keep looking and it will change."

Timothy did as he was told and said, "I see an elderly man, he has a full beard and he looks foreign."

"Alright now look around behind the mirror and tell me if you see a doorway."

"Yes I can see one."

"Now go on through the door and tell me what lies behind it."

"I see a city although I do not recognise it."

"Is there anybody around?"

"Yes."

"Well go over to the first one and tell me what he looks like."

"He is tall and thin and has the bearings of a Priest of some sort."

"Ask him what your name is."

"He said Canus the farmer."

"Good now picture yourself at the top of the stairs and feel yourself getting heavier as you descend them. Tell me when you get to the bottom."

"Now."

"Open your eyes and welcome back."

"That was strange what was the devil doing there?"

"Symbolic of your fear of the unknown you were entering somewhere you have never



been before.”

“Oh, they say he works in darkness, is that what he is then. My fear of the unknown.”

“One of his aspects he is also you without a purpose.”

“What,” Timothy said in surprise.

“The carnal body that you talk about, in this guise he takes on seven forms. Anger pride envy sloth gluttony lechery and avarice.”

“Oh I’ve seen some of these in action.”

“As God works through you so does the devil. Good and evil, light and darkness spirit or carnal. It is a choice of Man’s free will as to which one he takes.”

“And if that’s what the devil is what is God.”

“You with a purpose, it is an enlightened soul with a purpose to serve. The Soul has climbed the levels and reached fruition. You have evolved to your purpose.”

“So you are definitely not a Christian then.”

“I like the lifestyle but if you really wanted to define me you would call me a Gnostic. It is a form of Christianity one of many in fact.”

“And you don’t believe that he resurrected from the dead, that seems to be Christianity main thrust.”

“He may have resurrected but there was no way he could have taken his body with him. It is only your spirit that lives on. No one, not even a prophet can leave this world with his body intact. They are two separate dimensions.”

“Oh maybe I’m wasting my time with these Christians then.”

“Well they do lead a good life and you really do want to get yourself baptised.”

“Is that important then?”

“Oh yes. When you get baptised you make the conscious decision that you intend to try and lead a spiritual life. That is an act of free will and works in your favour. It you don’t though it’s not held against you for at the end of the day it is actually how you lead your life that matters.”

“Oh right I’ll bare that in mind.”

“Any way I must retire now I guess we have a long day tomorrow.”

Timothy fell to sleep not long afterwards and met up with Dina again.

“So,” he said, “The levels of understanding again. Now every faith has them encoded within their teachings. In Greece it comes under the twelve labours of Hercules and in Genesis the twelve sons of Jacob.”

“Really I never knew.”

“Yes, **Jacob** stands for **blessed with Gods will seeing self**. The Self is the Soul and the levels the strength of God’s will. God being creation.”

“Right,” Timothy said his imagination truly caught.

“First of all you have **Reuben** which stands for **knowing and love(self through light)** knowing in this sense is the spirit of life for with a mind you are what you know. A flower would not head for the light if he did not know it had to, it is this knowing that animates the being.”

(This is reinforced in the supplement section (bracketed); it is only through light or spiritual energy that matter can be animated. The strength of the energy the more refined the mind.)

“Yes I can see that. The mind needs direction.”

“Good now level two is **Simeon** or **understanding blesses life (through seeing light)**

which explains itself really.”

“True.”

“And the third level **Levi** or **God’s purpose through love blessed**, love blessed in this sense is understanding blessed or insight and through this you get God’s purpose.”

“Could you expand that a little please how is love understanding?”

“It is a by product of light, heat. This is what gives you your sense of well being. Think of light as wisdom and understanding of this wisdom love.”

“Yes I apologise for interrupting.”

“No, if you don’t understand it and need elaboration you are most welcome to interrupt me. Now level four **Judah** or **blessed with loving transformation (God’s spirit)**. This is done through the spirit of wisdom for that is what transforms your being (one of God’s spirits hence the brackets). Level five the journey and **Issachar** or **blessed with understanding (understanding God’s will) spirit of Gods knowing**. This is the Holy Spirit that transforms the self. It is the activation of the law of love, the giving of yourself to receive it and it is gained through service and spreading the Word. The first understanding is talking about understanding the Word of God or Gods will so it actually is a journey on two levels one of service to the divine or helping others and the other of knowledge of the divine of the Word of God.

These two merge at **Zebulun** or **mind and self of love (God’s purpose blessed with light)**. The mind for knowledge and the self for service Self being God’s purpose and light being the will.”

”Yes I can see that. I did not realise that it worked on two levels though.”

“Think of the practise and the theory if that’s any help. Now level seven and eight are combined, level seven the shift in consciousness brought about by the spiritual rebirth and level eight the opening of the channel that give you the spirit of knowing, when you know all things spiritually. **Joseph** is level seven and **means blessed seeing understanding through the spiritual word**. This is as opposed to knowing what it says it means you know what it’s actually talking about. It is a deeper understanding of the Word and is got through **self and light being blessed by God or a life blessed by light, Benjamin**. A life blessed with light is a spiritual life and the blessing of God is done through one of Gods spirits, the spirit of knowing. Now level nine is **Dan** or **transformed to God’s light** and this is when you become God’s purpose although it might take three forms.”

“Love pride and anger.”

“Well remembered, think of love as direct from the source, anger as spurned love or misguided love and pride as self love. Pick the right purpose and you climb to level ten or **Naphtali** or **light of God’s spiritual Word (wisdom of God (God’s purpose) blessed**. This is a deeper understanding of the Word once again. You understand the Word as a sentence for each letter is a symbol. They are the ten levels of understanding, level eleven is the final step and twelve the outcome. **Will of God transformed** and **God’s spiritual understanding and knowing. Gad** and **Asher**. Anyway that should keep you busy for a while” and disappeared.

Timothy woke up and he felt a strange inner strength which came in handy for the fire was still burning strongly. Three days had past but still there was no sign of it abating, in fact if anything it was getting worse. He managed to talk to Ebbe though so he told him what the angel had said.

“Really?” Ebbe said after he had finished, “He does indeed move in mysterious ways,” and laughed before he said, “It’s just a shame he can’t do anything with this fire. If this was Nero’s work I doubt if he realised the extent of the damage he was doing.”

“And you think that the Christians will get the blame I mean I am willing to wager that they are trying to put it out.”

“I fear that the accusations are flying already, you can guarantee that Nero is behind them.”

“But what has he got against them I mean they are good honest hard working people.”

“I think their honesty actually goes against them. They are out of place here for this is a dishonest city. That would be one of the reasons. I fear that most Romans don’t know what honesty is and it frightens them.”

“Yes but that’s hardly a reason.”

“I don’t know how Nero’s mind works but I’m guessing that their refusal to worship him as a God will stick in his head. He just points his finger at a repressed minority and the crowd follows. If it is just for city clearance then it is nothing personal, they just fitted the bill.”

“And so they’ll suffer just so the city gets cleared.”

“Politics is a very dirty business I’m afraid. Anthony has told me of it many times.”

“And he’ll just get away with it, there’s no justice.”

“Oh he’ll get his reward don’t you worry fate is an ardent foe don’t you fret.”

“Well we’ll just have to see about that one, after all he is an Emperor nothing can touch him.”

“For a crime of such magnitude he will have to take his own life that is the only way to get him of the cycle.”

“The cycle?”

“Life and rebirth unless he commits suicide he will remain on it and so could come back and do the same.”

“But I thought you said you lose your personality it would be a different person.”

“Different person maybe but he might still have the madness that disordered the last personality.”

“Oh,” Timothy said, “So the madness lives on. How would suicide work then?”

“Well it means that he would have deprived his Soul of the chance to grow and from an act of free will. This would condemn him to perdition. His Spirit would be ruined.”

“I thought that the Spirit was the Soul.”

“No, the Spirit is the Will or Word of God and the Soul is God for that is the purpose that you serve, the Self. The Will is a manifestation of the Self. If out of an act of your own free will you terminate your life you actually terminate your Self and so the spark is snuffed out and you have nothing to feed on. You don’t mentally die though you just keep in limbo.”

“Limbo, isn’t that a place between heaven and hell that the unbaptised go to?”

Ebbe laughed and said, “I thought the only place between heaven and hell was Earth.”

“Oh,” Timothy said and thought awhile before saying, “Mind you I suppose when you have reincarnation it sort of nulls all that heaven and hell.”

“They both exist but not in the sense you mean.”

“Really so what actually are they?”

“They are both states of mind, hell is emotional turmoil and heaven spiritual bliss it is

what you call an inner sense of peace and is got through enlightenment. It is not a material thing though for, for all Nero's wealth and power he still has emotional turmoil. The only difference is that Nero has the power to make others life hell to a greater degree than the normal citizen."

"So we can make each others' lives hell. Yes now you mention it I can see it."

"Most of the time we don't know we are doing it. It is good that you recognise it though for when you become conscious of it you generally stop doing it."

"I'll definitely keep that in mind."

"It's easily done do unto others as you would be done by, I believe that was one of yours," and laughed before saying, "You knew it but you did not understand it."

"A deeper understanding," Timothy said upon realisation.

"That's what it's all about. Now to get to this level of understanding you have to lose your pride for that only sees the small picture. It is only aware of itself and so sees no others. When you can do this you can truly become a spiritual being for you lose your self-consciousness and become your purpose."

"Sorry? I was up with you until then."

"Your thoughts will all be centred to the service of others. Your purpose it to serve, that is what you were created for. Self consciousness is when your thoughts are centred on your own material desires selfishness would be another name for it."

"And when you become your purpose? Is that called anything?"

"Yes, Soul consciousness. When you serve your purpose you feed your Soul through transformation by the Holy Spirit. You see it is not a one way thing. By serving others you serve yourself through the Holy Spirit."

"Love others as you love yourself. Yes, I can see that. I did not realise that it meant that though."

"A lot of this wisdom works on different levels. No, he was an extraordinary man that Jesus. Here's one for you then. **There is nothing from without a man that entering into him could defile him, but the things that come out of him, those are they that defile the man.**"

"He was talking about food saying that it went into the stomach and not the heart. I guess it was an attack on all the laws about what you could and could not eat."

"One level but he also said a little later when explaining to his disciples **for from within, out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts and a myriad of other things** finishing it with **all these evil things come from within and defile man.**"

"Yes he was saying that evil comes from man's hearts though I don't really understand what you are getting at."

"Man creates his own evil that was the message in essence."

"And the food?"

"He was imparting wisdom even when answering a mundane and probably to him inane question. An arrogant man would not for a start for he would see it, with all his learning, beneath him. That tells me he was truly a humble man."

"Well yes but he was well known for his humility."

"That was just a side issue the wisdom itself is the point I am getting at."

"Oh right you can create your own heaven and hell through actions of your will."

"A deeper understanding, anyway it's getting late now. Hopefully Anthony will want to get back soon. We're wasting our time here anyway."

“4 days it’s burned surely it can’t go on much longer?”

They talked some more until Anthony decided to call it a day and Timothy went home tired and fell quickly to sleep.

#### Chapter 4

Timothy found himself in front of Dina, “Six days of creation. What do you know about it?”

“It was said that it took God six days to create the world but I am guessing it means something else.”

“Good, on the **first day** God said **let there be light**, and there was light. Eden in fact for it stands for through transformation through light. That’s right we are talking about enlightenment. And what comes from enlightenment?”

“Er, I am not sure.”

“What are the rivers that leave the Garden of **Eden**?” Dina said giving him a clue Timothy thought awhile before saying “**Pison, Gihon, Hiddekel and Euphrates.**”

“So, **from the transformation through light the word blessed with understanding sees light, the will blessed with spirit sees light, the spirit blessed with transformation transforms to work through God’s purpose and through love the spiritual word knows wisdom through understanding.** Or in other words?”

Timothy thought awhile before saying, “You understand the word instead of just knowing it, your will becomes spiritual, you get transformed to work God’s purpose and you get a deeper understanding of the Word.”

“Good, well that’s the first day sorted.”

“So they are markers for hidden knowledge that’s amazing.”

“Yes quite a book Genesis. Now **day two** is the **splitting of the waters** and this is the genealogy of both **Cain** and **Seth**, wisdom and understanding. The genealogy of Cain is the evolution of this wisdom and Seth is the evolution of this understanding. I will do these for you but after that you are on your own.”

“Fair enough I’m guessing it gets quite long winded for there are a lot of names if I remember right.”

“Very true I won’t go through the ancestry I will just tell you what it stands for. We’ll start with Cain then.”

“Alright.”

**“The will (God blessed with light) - through God’s light seeing spiritual will you get blessed with knowing God’s transformation, from this you get a life of spiritual love blessed by God through God’s purpose which gives you a life of spiritual wisdom and loving understanding of God and God’s purpose and from this God’s purpose and God lives in your spiritual will. Now this married to a mind blessed with God’s purpose(the purpose of God’s spirit)gives you a wisdom loving self of God, God’s purpose and a will of God’s blessed light which is the same as the light of God, God’s life and God’s spirit.”**

“Amazing and you want me to work that out?”

“No I am just showing you how it actually works. In time you will understand it properly so don’t worry about it. No, just sit back and enjoy it.”

“Well I won’t argue with that so what is next then the descendants of Seth?”

**“Understanding(through spiritual wisdom),”**Dina said.” **Through light seeing**

**understanding you get a will of God blessed with light (Gods light) from which you get a life of God, the spirit of God's purpose, God (God's purpose through God's purpose), From this you are blessed with God's knowing through transformation from which light sees spiritual will and from this you get a life of spiritual will, from which light sees Gods spirit and you get spiritual understanding (through life), the spirit of God's life and blessed with God's spiritual Word (through spiritual wisdom)."**

**"Shem, Ham and Japheth."**

**"Or grass, herb and fruit on the third day their genealogies in fact."**

**"Right."**

**"Now this section tells you what you get from each of the sons and then goes on in more detail to explain each gift. I will give you Ham to explain it for that might sound confusing."**

**"Sure although I think I know what you mean."**

**"Can't be too careful so the sons of Ham are Cush, Mizraim, Phut and Canaan which translated says. From the spirit of God's life you get a will of loving spiritual understanding, a life blessed with the mind knowing God's blessed life, the spiritual Word (loving wisdom) and a will of God (light of God and God's light)."**

**"Yes I can see that."**

**"And then it takes each son and does the same from Cush you get Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, Sabtechah and Nimrod. So from a will of loving spiritual understanding you get understanding through a self of God, the spirit of God's love blesses God's purpose, understanding God's self the wisdom of God's spirit, knowing seeing God's life (God's spirit) and understanding God's self wisdom through spiritual will (Gods spirit) and light blesses life(knowing seeing transformation)."**

**"Right and it does the same for Shem and Japheth?"**

**"That's right symbolised by grass herbs and fruit as I said earlier. Now the fourth day is an expansion of the genealogy of Shem and takes you as far as Abram. The fifth day is the generations of Nahor up to Rebekah and the sons of Abraham by Keturah. It is more of an expansion of what has already been said but going into greater detail and finally day six is what's left"**

**"And that's Genesis."**

**"Yes, day six includes all Jacob's children and all their children so you can imagine it's quite a day."**

**"I can imagine."**

**"I will give you all the symbols and so you can look at it at your own leisure. The better your understanding the more you will understand it so use that as your gauge."**

**"Fair enough," Timothy said and Dina related them before he disappeared.**

**Timothy woke up to another eventful day and as he worked with Ebbe he told him all he was told.**

**"I have heard that things were hidden in the names," Ebbe said, "Brings up a few nasty questions though."**

**"It does?"**

**"Well was Abraham real or just a hidden sentence in a story created for that purpose or maybe both?"**

“Oh I see what you mean, could he have been both then?”

“I would never underestimate the power of Creation but now you mentioned the six days of Creation it throws up an interesting point.”

“It does?” Timothy said confused.

“Well according to the six days Man was not actually created to the sixth day. Maybe that was when Man actually came to be.”

“Oh right so who do you think was actually the first Man?”

“If Jacobs’s sons were the levels of understanding I would say it was after that,” Ebbe said and thought awhile before saying, “You said that you were given the letters. What does **Israel** stand for?”

Timothy thought awhile and said, “**Blessed with understanding. Knowing God through God’s purpose**”

“That sounds like insight maybe it’s just a state of mind then. Man in general as opposed to a specific person. That point will be worth following, if nothing else it will keep our minds of this heat.”

“I wouldn’t really know how.”

“We’ll just back track a little, you mentioned two types of Man if I remember rightly.”

“Er yes,” Timothy said sheepishly.

“There might have been one who was hairier and destined to inherit the Earth and one who took it from him, us.”

“I wouldn’t really like to comment on that it’s well beyond my imagination’s scope.”

“That’s only your pride talking. Go with it, it will pass the time if nothing else.”

“Alright,” Timothy said shrugging his shoulders.

“So maybe,” then as if hit by inspiration, “One moment, I think I have it. It’s evolution from carnal to spiritual.”

“Sorry?”

“Esau was the animal side of man and Jacob the spiritual side. He got the birth right for his service, it was no trick it was just evolution through grace. So Israel is a state of mind but not the one I thought it was.”

“Was it?” Timothy said slightly lost.

“It wasn’t insight. It was a different state of mind. He was a man God.”

“What?”

“He was Jacob after he had climbed the levels symbolised by his 12 children. Now that is paralleled in Greek mythology by the 12 labours of Hercules.”

“I don’t know much about that I’m afraid,” Timothy admitted.

“Hercules had to perform 12 labours and once he had accomplished them he would be classed as a God.”

“Right,” Timothy said his imagination truly caught, “And would that be paralleled with Jacobs struggle with an angel?”

“Good question, well the journey works on two levels if I remember rightly. Service which would be Esau and knowledge of the divine, the Word of God.”

“And an angel is a messenger of God would that be the Holy Spirit by any chance although I can’t see why he would have to wrestle with it.”

“It could be just a story, it maybe only saying that you get the blessing through the Holy Spirit.”

“Well there is that I suppose and it could mean the emotional struggle that you have to go

through to purge your soul.”

“Yes I like it, now you’re thinking. Speaking of thinking I reckon that the levels are the rungs of Jacobs’s ladder. These are what take you from Earthly pleasure to spiritual bliss.”

“I can see that, quite a book Genesis.”

“So I wonder if Israel lived at all, I mean did Hercules?”

“That’s a very interesting question I think that I will ask that angel when I see him again,”

“It would be worth finding out,” Ebbe said and they continued their work. It was another hot day but they talked like friends and so it soon passed. The fifth day saw them both tired and hungry and praying that it would soon be over.

Timothy’s journey to sleep saw him meeting up with Dina. His first question was did Israel actually exist.

“No,” Dina said, “It means blessed understanding (knowing God through God’s purpose). Your friend was right it is a state of mind.”

“And Abraham?”

“God’s self knows Gods spirit (God’s life) that’s God’s blessing. Before that he was Abram or God’s self knows God’s life. Life without a spiritual purpose.”

“So how does this all actually work? For Israel is also God’s blessing, it seems out of sequence.”

“No you’re looking at it from the viewpoint of time. Genesis is not a work of time. It never could be. You could not even imagine the time span between Eden and the floods, it’s over 60,000 years. It was Man that came from Eden. Adam means God transformed to God’s life. He was not a person but a symbol of a person. Genesis is actually a book of symbols. Its actual symbol is infinity the inverted 8. The first circle is the levels of understanding Adam to Abraham and the second circle the levels of spiritual understanding Abraham to Israel as above then so below for it works on two levels.”

“That’s amazing.”

“Oh yes quite a book. The symbol is also included on a smaller scale, the large circle Abram’s journey Chapter 12 to the end of Chapter 13 and the smaller circle the promised nations in Chapter 15.”

“So these people who wrote Genesis, they must have had quite an imagination to put it together.”

“Well they had a little help,” Dina said with a laugh, “They were humble men. Men of God that saw their own demise and hid their knowledge.”

“So what happened then?”

“Overrun and killed by less enlightened and more aggressive men. They were not alone though for other groups had survived the flood and wrote their stories in different ways.”

“And the flood actually happened it was not just a symbol.”

“Oh Genesis is literal but only in the big picture. Cain did not exist as a person and neither did Abel,” and laughed before saying, “Even that works on two levels.”

“What, how?”

“It is also talking about aspects of your mind. Cain is symbolic of your will, Abel your purpose and Seth your understanding.”

“I understand will and understanding I’m not sure about Abel though?”

“Well you killed him so you wouldn’t be,” Dina said with a laugh, “It’s your creative



ability, your imagination. It stands for God's self through God's purpose. When man went against his purpose it had nothing better to do than to dwell in negativity Things like guilt and anger, paranoia anything a negative imagination could muster in fact."

"Oh so one level is physical and the other is mental."

"That's right, you could go on more and more into it and I recommend that you do because you will grow considerably in understanding but that will do for now."

"Well thank you anyway you have given me something to think about, definitely."

"Oh one final thing before I go the levels of understanding are set out as three concentric circles doubled up because you actually have two minds," and disappeared.

Timothy woke up with quite a shock on hearing that and could not grasp it at all. He told Ebbe what he had been told and he too could not come to terms with it. "You must have misheard him," he said because that was the only conclusion he could come up with.

"Maybe you are right, that was the only thing that would make sense but I am pretty sure. No, you must be right."

"Anyway we have work to do it looks like most of it has burned out though so hopefully it will be over today. That Nero took his time in sending help, low despicable man."

"I'm not sure about that I hear that he has opened up all public structures and even opened up his own gardens to the poor and homeless."

"Well that's not a lot really I mean he did actually start it."

"Oh," Timothy said duly chastened.

"Besides I have heard that he sang the destruction of Troy in a performance as a comparison."

"What really?"

"Yes so it seems he is taking it seriously doesn't it?"

"I stand corrected."

"You can mark my words also he did not take any interest in the fire until it started to actually threaten his own property."

"Any way I think it will be out soon," Timothy said just to change the subject.

"And then the accusations fly."

"I don't think I will be getting baptised any more anyway after all you have been telling me I wouldn't mind taking up your type of life style."

"Well I find it fulfilling," Ebbe said and laughed before saying, "And you don't have to travel too far for the meetings."

"I won't argue with that," Timothy said before changing the mood by saying, "Do you think Peter will be alright?"

"Yes, he's a wily old goat he does not fear death so he should put on quite a show." (He was actually crucified upside down the following year, he said that he was unworthy to die the same way up as Jesus.)

"I think that they all will."

"We'll soon see," Ebbe said and the conversation ended.

The fire did eventually go out and Nero rebuilt it to his own glory strengthening rumours of him as the instigator. The following year a Senate inspired plot against him was discovered and a lot of prominent Romans were forced to take their own lives. At the same time he was faced with local disorders in Armenia, Britain and Judea so it was quite a busy year all told. A.D.68 saw a rebellion with the army itself with Roman commanders in Africa, Spain and Gaul trying to seize power in their prospective regions. Nero was

forced to flee Rome and was sentenced to death by the Senate in his absence. On hearing this he committed suicide and left us with his immortal words, ‘What an artist the world is losing’ though I guess the world did not perceive it that way.

(Nero fancied himself as an artist and insisted in giving public performances in which he sang and played the lyre, attendance to these were compulsory and whilst he was singing no one was allowed to leave, not even for the most urgent reasons. Women were known to give birth there while others feigned death and were carried out for burial.)

And what of the Christians? Well they got the blame and suffered the consequences of it. They suffered their fate without fear for their faith was their strength and though seldom admitted the Romans were impressed by how they faced their death and stood up to their torture.(It did not stop them doing it but I guess you can’t have everything.)

And finally Timothy. He grew in understanding and learned a lot from Ebbe before he left Anthony's service and went out into the big bad world. He ended up in Britain although it was not called that then and lived a good life dying at a ripe old age. He never forgot the fire nor the Christians for something like that tends to stick in your memory. He never did get baptised nor did any of his seven children.

### Alphabet of symbols

Name	eng.equiv.	symbol	meaning
aleph	a	ox	God
beth	b	house	self
gimel	c, g	camel	will
daleth	d	door	transformation
he	h	window	spirit
vau	u, v	nail	love
zain	z	sword	mind
cheth	ch	fence	spiritual will
teth	t	serpent	wisdom
yod	i,y	hand	blessed
kaph	k	palm	work
lamed	l	ox goad	God’s purpose
mem	m	water	life
nun	n	fish	light
samekh	s	support	understanding
ayin	o	eye	see
pe	p	mouth	the word
tzaddi	x, tz	fish hook	insight
qoth	q	back head	soul
resh	r	head	knows
shin	sh	tooth	spir.under.
tau	th	cross	spir.wisdom

f is the same as p

e could be through, from, and, and such words like that

ae together means God through (as in aesop)

oe mean seeing through

### 3. The Final Tale

Christianity was absorbed into the state eventually and this gave it influence over many more people. It survived the fall of Rome and greatly prospered although they lost their original sense and so a reminder was sent, the prophet Mohammed. Now man being man fought over what the two prophets said, quite silly really for they both came from the same source and great wars came to be. Roman influence lived on through the Byzantine or their Eastern Empire which only fell from power with the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453. It also lived on through the conscious adoption of its style by the barbarians that had over run it and the Roman Catholic church (Which included the church of the East until 1053 when the patriarch of Constantinople closed all the churches that adhered to the Roman liturgy and was excommunicated for his sins the following year) which kept Latin as its language. Man grew in number and through bloodshed nations came to be, the still Empire built so war was never far from his mind so it was a time of war and death, one we have not quite shook off. Technology evolved untold and as we entered the age of air new advances came by the day. I have called this tale the Tempest and the Fury, it starts with an introduction, I hope you like it.

#### Intro

For society to be sustainable it has to be based on good will. The threat of violence and retribution whether divine or secular though decisive is only short term and as Man grows in understanding it soon loses its force. We live in a material world and always will as long as Man remains ignorant as to what God is in essence. Until Man finds his true purpose society will go around in circles until eventually it will disappear up its own .....

Sister Susan studied the old wooden crucifix and took in Christ's pain as if it was her own. The anguished face in the throes of death left a deep impression on her along with a certain amount of confusion. It was normal to see a benign and peaceful expression as if the man had accepted his fate with the grace of God his rod and not some poor wretched figure in immense agony." Where did you get this?" she said to a balding middle aged man who owned the shop she was standing in.

The man looked up from the newspaper he was reading and on seeing the crucifix said, "Oh that, it was a house clearance on Ordish Road, very strange house and no mistake."

"How much do you want for it?" she said in her usual brisk and forth right tone.

"Twenty five quid to you love," he said unperturbed by her tone.

"Too much would you take ten pound?"

"No," the man said thinking it over, "That's the price I've set and that's the price I'll take."

"Fifteen then and you'll find your reward in heaven."

"Not me lady I'll find my reward in silver and gold."

"I'll bet Judas said the same," she said and put the crucifix back on the table.

"Then he sound like a good man, a man who knows his own mind and is not swayed by superstitious hogwash. Now if you'll excuse me I'm in the middle of a very interesting article about the extravagance of the church and its indifference to the under privileged,"

and went back to reading his paper. Sister Susan left the shop, her temper well ignited, and marched the short distance back to her real sister's house in Temple Street. She was still angry as she shut the front door behind her. She called out to see if her sister, whose name was Shirley, was still there. Shirley came through from the kitchen and said, "The kettle's just boiled, would you care for a cup of tea?"

"I think I need a gin and tonic there's no respect for God nowadays," and went on to tell her about the incident in the shop.

After she had finished Shirley said, "I wouldn't worry about it. He's well known around here," and they talked some more.

Meanwhile not two streets away the shop was being mentioned although for another reason. A threadbare flat saw two teenagers making elaborate plans.

"It should be easy," Dave Nixon said as he lit a cigarette, "Piece of piss. I reckon that he must be worth thousands. They say that he don't trust the banks either so it will just be a case of finding it."

"It's probably under his mattress," Steve Allen said doing the same, "So how are we going to do it?"

"Jump him before he locks up for the night, we'll soon beat it out of him."

"I'm not sure about that," Steve said nervously, "Couldn't we just sneak in when he's out or something?"

"No good we might not be able to find it. Besides he might have it in a safe so we would need the combination."

"But we have dealt with him before he will know what we look like and so easily identify us."

"A couple of masks are all that it takes," Dave said and got off the chair he was sitting on. He went over to a painted, battered wall unit and opening out the middle drawer took out two rubber masks of grotesque old men, "Just like these in fact."

"Have you done something like this before?" Steve said in surprise, wondering what he was doing with them in the first place.

"No I was going to do it with Jamie but he O.D'ed poor bastard."

"Oh," Steve said and quickly changed the subject, "So when do you want to do it then?"

"Tonight's as good a night as any, the sooner I'm out this shit hole the better."

"Well I won't argue with that," Steve said taking a mask from him, "Are we going tooled up?"

"A couple of hammers should do it," Dave said going back to the drawer, "I should not think he would put up much of a struggle," and took two hammers from the same drawer.

"Well you certainly have planned it then," Steve said with more than just a hint of admiration.

"I don't want to leave anything to chance I reckon we owe it to Jamie," and said no more. In the flat next door to them the conversation was just as animated.

"Look it was a crap job and I am better off without it," Jake o Toole said angrily although his wife Mary was not to be convinced.

"And what is going to put food on the table now then?" she said in the same tone, "You are always walking out on jobs, you don't want work, that's your problem that is."

"How can you say that I'm a good worker and you know it? I'm not putting up with crap like that though, them bastard employment agencies are giving me £4.87 an hour, what a joke. I wouldn't mind but I know for a fact that they are charging the company £18 an

hour.”

“I doubt that very much and anyway you were getting £5 an hour.”

“Including holiday pay and what do you mean you doubt it? I happen to know that the company I was sent to was charging £38 an hour for my services, that is why I walked out.”

“Well I know that, that rate does not include holiday pay it would be illegal if it did.”

“So sue the bastards then,” Jake said angrily.

“What are we going to do Jake?” Mary said sadly, “We can’t live on the dole. Especially with them rent restrictions. Besides we wouldn’t get it anyway, now that you’ve walked out.”

“Something will turn up,” Jake said calming down, “There’s plenty of work out there, one’s bound to pay a decent wage it’s just a case of finding it that’s all.”

“I hope so I really hope so.”

“I wouldn’t mind but I am trying my best, unlike that smack head next door, keeping us up half the night with his music.”

“Well I wouldn’t envy his lifestyle.”

“No perhaps you’re right,” Jake said, “He’s just given up hasn’t he.” “Though sometimes I would not blame him,” he said under his breath Back at the shop it was business as usual although the emphasis was on buying rather than selling.

“Look Davies,” A thin man in his early twenties said as they were looking at an expensive music system, “It’s worth three hundred quid. State of the art stuff we’re talking and it’s still in its box.”

“That’s Mr. Davies to you,” the balding man said, “And £20 is the best offer I will give you. Take it or leave it, it’s probably stolen anyway.”

“No, it’s not it was a Christmas present from my mother. I reckon she’s still got the receipt.”

“Then you should have brought it with you although it won’t affect my offer.”

“A hundred quid go on, it’s Xmas.”

“Xmas has gone look I am not a charity. It does not say Oxfam on the door. Twenty quid is the best offer you’ll get from me.”

“Sixty then its New Years Eve tomorrow.”

“What’s that got to do with it? Look if you are not interested in selling it don’t waste my time. I reckon that you only came in to get warm that’s all.”

The youth saw that he was getting nowhere so he said, “Alright then £20,” and the deal was struck.

Once outside the young man was quickly joined by another, “So how did you get on then Jacko?” he said quickly.

“£20 was his best offer.”

“What? And you took it.”

“What would you have done then Sidy I reckon we had no choice in the matter.”

“Tight bastard I reckon that we ought to brick all his windows. That will teach him.”

“No point,” Jacko said with an air of resignation, “We got to get some money before tomorrow. £20 won’t get us far.”

“Not very far at all,” Sidy said and looked through the window of the second hand shop,

“I reckon we ought to come back a little later and turn him over. It looks like a right Aladdin’s cave in there.”

“I bet he’s belled up and besides I hear that he is well connected.”

“Those bastards usually are,” Siddy said and thought awhile before saying, “I’ve heard that old Ma Kelly is visiting her granddaughter in London and will be away for a few days.”

“It may be worth a look around then I don’t think she’ll have much but beggars can’t be choosers.”

“My thought exactly,” Siddy said and they both walked the short distance to her house. Rosalind Kelly poured herself a drink and took it into the living room. She was still angry with her granddaughter for letting her down. She had, had her heart set on a trip to London and had boasted to all her neighbours about it. She would just have to keep her head down and pretend that she’d gone she reasoned as her pride would not let her come clean and admit the truth. As she sat in the darkness her thoughts drifted back to her granddaughter and her ungratefulness. How could she treat her in such a manner after all she had done for her? She had given her most of her nest egg to help her through a particularly bad financial patch only to receive some lame excuse about there being no room at the inn.

“Ungrateful bitch,” she said aloud but a noise stopped her saying anything else. It was the sound of breaking glass and it sent total fear to all her senses. The sound of an unlocking door came next and after that a man’s voice, “Easy as shelling peas. I’ll have a scout around the upstairs and you take the down.”

She remained paralysed with fear as she heard footsteps approaching her. She tried to move but her legs shook too much. She saw the beam of a flash-light scan the room and sunk deeper into the chair to try and shield her from it. The footsteps went over towards the wall unit and the sound of opening drawers then followed.

“Twenty lousy quid,” the voice said in just above a whisper, “She must have more than that surely.”

She recognised it as that of her next door neighbour’s youngest son Timothy Siddels and took comfort from that fact. She switched the lamp on next to her and it illuminated the room. “What the hell do you think you are doing here?” she said angrily to the surprised young burglar.

Siddy said nothing as the shock had stunned his senses. Jacko, who had just entered the room was a lot more forth coming, “Shut up bitch or you’ll get hurt.”

“Samuel Jackson,” she said with disdain, “I might have known that you would have something to do with this. Now get out both of you or I will call the police.”

“I don’t think you realise the seriousness of the situation you are in,” Jacko said, “Now where do you keep your money and don’t give us any more of your bullshit.”

“I will not tell you that,” she said and started shouting loudly for help. Jacko smashed the torch across her mouth launching the top set of her false teeth into orbit.

“Shut it,” he said in a quiet but menacing tone, “I warned you.”

Blood trickled down her chin but still she was defiant. She tried to scream once more but was quickly silenced by another blow although this time it was to the side of her head.

She fell to one side gasping for breath.

“Stop it Jacko,” Siddy said, “She’s had enough, leave her.”

“Leave her, what are you mad or summut? As soon as we’ve gone she’ll be on the phone to the filth.”

“What are you saying?” Siddy said looking at Jacko in horror.

“I ain’t doing time for her, no chance.”

“No, no. I’ll not be a part of this, that’s murder that is.”

“Siddy there is no other way, if there was it would not have come to this,” and hit her once more. She shook in pain as her nervous system took on a life of its own. “Money,” Jacko said in almost a bark, “Tell us and all this will be over quickly.” There was no answer just a gurgle, “She’s beyond help now,” Jacko said and put her out of her misery. “This ain’t right,” Siddy said trying to black it out, “This ain’t right.”

“It is done now, right give this place the once over and for fuck’s sake switch of the lamp.”

Siddy did as he was told and then they searched the place from top to bottom. “£60” Jacko said after they had finished, “What a waste of time.”

“So what happens now?”

“Keep your head down and it will soon be over this kind of thing happens all the time.”

“But you killed her and for sixty lousy quid.”

“I didn’t know that she would be here. Look let’s get out of here before anyone else comes round. We can talk about it later,” and they both left with stealth to avoid rousing suspicion.

Meanwhile Jake o Toole was drowning his sorrows with Special Brew at his friend Martin’s house. He had, had a couple already and his tongue was loosening up quite nicely.

“Fuckin’ joke isn’t it,” he said crushing an empty can, “They are crying out for people and still the bastards want to pay you nothing. The bastards don’t deserve good workers.”

“So what are you going to do now?”

“Get the New Year out of the way and try again I suppose although I don’t know why I bother.”

“You got to eat; the bastards have got you by the short and curlies.”

“Don’t I know it I’m getting earache from Mary already what a life eh? How are you getting on anyway?”

“Same shit different day.”

“Are you still working at that office building?”

“For my sins, it’s all one way with them divvies. They’re obsessed with safety when it suits them and use it as a stick to beat you with at every opportunity.”

“Sounds the same as my last job.”

“Yes well and incompetence, I reckon they must have written the book on it. Between the architect and the client nobody knows where they stand. They keep changing their minds half way through the job creating untold extra work. I will be glad when it’s over I can tell you. I get sent to do a job and told to borrow the tools for it. Who from? Nobody’s going to borrow them me and then get billed for the work that I do, it don’t make sense.”

“I don’t think their logic sees that,” Jake said and opened another can, “No, they can’t see past their profit and loss charts,” and took a large drink from the can, “So how’s Sheila getting on at the hospital?”

“Worse than me by the sound of it” Martin said and took a large draught from the can, “Penny pinching at the expense of the patients. They’ve stopped the overtime to try and save money and replaced some of the nurses with temps. Oh here, you’ll love this one. They’ve brought over nurses from India who can barely speak the language and threw them in at the deep end.”

“That sounds like it could be dangerous. What happens if they misunderstand their instructions?”

“It will be a bit like me and the job I am in,” Martin said with a laugh, “They’ll be losing their patients, N.H.S. no hope society. No, I do feel sorry for her. Half of the staff have lost morale and don’t do anything so the other half have to work even harder. It is being run on good will alone and that is quickly diminishing,”

“Ah fuck it, happy New Year,”

Meanwhile back at the shop Mr. Davies was serving a customer blissfully unaware that he was being watched. “So how’s your Xmas gone Andy?” he said to a large heavily tattooed man on the other side of the counter.

“Expensive hobby nowadays John I reckon it’s about cost me an arm and a leg. If it gets any more pricey I’ll have to sell a kidney, it’s all want, want, want,” and looking over at the crucifix, “He’s got a lot to answer for I can tell you.”

“Oh some penguin came in earlier wanting that, tried to get it for next to nothing but I put her right.”

“I’ll bet,” Andy said with a laugh.

“Yes, they’ve got a cheek thinks because she’s got a habit I ought to do her a favour. I mean we’ve all got habits, mine’s smoking,” and laughed.

“Yes,” Andy said still laughing, “You’d have been burned as a heretic not that long ago. So anyway have you got anything special in at the moment?”

“Sure have,” John said and passed him a piece of paper, “Not a bad week actually. Smack-heads, God bless them.”

“Not bad at all. Yes, I’ll take the lot I know just the fellow who would be interested and the price is right.”

“Fair enough, when do you want to pick them up?”

“Me and our kid will be around tomorrow noon with the van. I’ll settle up then if that’s alright.”

“Sounds good to me.”

Andy thought awhile before he said, “No I tell you what I’ll settle now while I’ve got the money on me,” and took out a bulging wallet full of £50's.

“Sounds even better looks like I’ll have a happy new year.”

“Made any plans?”

“Quiet night in I begrudge paying just to get into a pub and as for them taxi drivers I reckon that they make up their own fare.”

“Grabbing bastards I know what you mean they’ve ruined it with their greed, season of good will, yes right.”

“Supposed to be discouraging drink driving nowadays, not like that it don’t.”

“Any way £2,000 John it’s a pleasure doing business with you.”

“You too Andy,” John said as he took the money.

“And I’ll see you noon tomorrow,” Andy said as he left the shop.

## **Chapter 2 .**

Meanwhile outside the shop Steve and Dave were getting impatient

“I wish he’d hurry up,” Dave said, “He’s been in there ages.”

“Look at the size of that wallet though,” Steve said, “That’s quite a wedge he’s just handed over. We’ll do all right here.”



“Well yes, that’s unless we die of old age beforehand. He looks very familiar though.”  
“Not to me, quick nip into the alleyway he looks like he’s about to come out.”  
They nipped into the alleyway and heard the door open and shut again. After about a minute Steve looked at Dave and said, “Ready?” Dave nodded his head and so they both put their masks on. They checked the street to make sure that it was empty and then charged through the door.  
“What the,” John said but got no further.  
“Shut it,” Steve said and grabbing him by the throat he pinned him up against the wall and said, “Now give us your money and you won’t get hurt.”  
Dave locked the door and put the closed sign on while this was happening. “All clear,” he said after he had finished.  
“Money I said,” Steve said increasing his grip and watching John’s face turn red.  
“You’ll get nothing from me scum,” John gasped.  
“That’s right,” Steve said banging his head against the wall, “We float to the top and look down on you because you’re scraping the bottom of the barrel.”  
Dave came over and cracked John’s kneecaps with the hammer. Pain surged through John’s body and when Steve let go of his throat he fell to the floor.  
“I think you have misunderstood the situation,” Dave said, “We are not here to fuck around; we are here for your money. We’ll take that wedge for a start,” and searched his pockets. Dave looked at Steve when he had finished and said, “It ain’t here.”  
“Money,” Steve barked at John who was still in agony on the floor, “Where is it?”  
“You’ll regret this,” John said through his pain, “You’ll rue the day that you ever crossed my path.”  
Dave hit him across the face with his fist whilst Steve searched the drawers. “Looks like about £300” he said after he had finished.  
“Where’s the real money,” Dave said and pounded his face across the cold unforgiving floor. He hit him again and again and was just lining up for the third time when John said, “Alright, you’ll get the money, just don’t hurt me any more.”  
“You could have saved yourself a lot of pain,” Dave said as he helped him back on his feet, “Right, where is it?”  
“It’s through the back,” John said and they both accompanied him as he limped to his living quarters. It was quite an ornate room with top branded furniture and state of the art electrical goods. He walked over to a large wall unit and opened the left hand drawer. Steve saw a flash of metal and said, “Watch it he’s got a gun.”  
Before he had time to pull it out completely Dave had struck him hard across the head with the hammer and he fell heavily to the ground.  
“The bastard was going to shoot us,” Dave said as he struck him a second time. He struck him once more and John was finished.  
“That’s done it,” Steve said, “How the hell are we going to find out where he hides his money now?”  
“Switch the shop lights out and we’ll search the place we’ve got plenty of time.”  
Steve did as he was told and whilst out there he saw the crucifix. He picked it up and brought it back with him.  
“Whatever are you going to do with that?” Dave said on his return.  
“I might keep it; it seems to have something about it.”  
“Well whatever,” Dave said and started searching the wall unit. After a couple of minutes

he said, "Would you look at that. There must be at least twenty grand here. I think we've hit the jack pot Stevie boy."

"I'll scout the upstairs and see if anything else turns up," Steve said and went upstairs. After 10 minutes the search was complete so they put the money in a large briefcase that was by the wall unit and sneaked out. Dave kept the gun and Steve the crucifix. Meanwhile Jake had left Martin's and was walking home unsteadily on his feet. It was dark now and the air had developed quite a chill so he clutched his coat tightly to try and ward off the cold. He was in pretty good spirits as the drink had nulled a lot of the anger. Well he was until he got back to the flat that was for he found that his bike was no longer there.

"Mary, Mary," he shouted, "Come here."

The door opened and Mary appeared, "What's the matter?"

"My bike," Jake said angrily, "Somebody's pinched my fucking bike."

"What, when?"

"How the hell do I know, it was here when I left."

"I never heard anything Jake. I knew that you should have got it insured. It's probably kids."

"Bastards," Jake said with venom, "How am I going to get around now?"

"Check the park you never know, they might have pinched it to go scrambling."

"They want their hands chopped off it was worth fuck all to them," and made his way to the park. He did not get too far before he found it. It was lying on the school playground twenty yards away on the opposite side of the street. Jake picked it up and checked it for damage. Both the clocks were smashed along with the head lamp. The ignition switch and covering panel were missing along with the side panel on the battery side and the wiring at the front end was a total mess. He wheeled it back home and left it in its usual place.

"You found it then," Mary said, "Was it in the park?"

"No the school opposite looks like they could not get it to start and so just dropped it on the floor."

"Much damage?"

"Front end I've got no chance of repairing it though as it would not be worth it."

"So what happens now then?"

"I don't know I really don't need this at all," and sadly shook his head.

Whilst all that was happening Steve and Dave had made their way back to the flat and were counting their ill gotten gains.

"I reckon there's forty grand here," Dave said, "And what about that Lugar then, we have definitely had a good day."

"I don't know about that if they ever find us we'll have a murder charge on us."

"No chance of that we'll just keep quiet and keep our heads down and no one will ever know. Just don't be too flash with the cash as it will draw attention to us."

"I suppose so," Steve said and then thought awhile before saying, "Yes you're right not a bad day at all."

"Anyway, what did you take that bleeding thing back for, are you getting religious or something?"

"Me no," Steve said with a laugh, "No look at the face man. It's in agony."

"Well so would I be if some bastard nailed me to a cross," Dave said with a laugh.

“No, normally it’s not it usually has a peaceful expression.”

“Oh, so what are you actually going to do with it?”

“I don’t know as yet I might give it to my auntie, she’s into stuff like that.”

“Really,” Dave said although not too interested.

“Yes, she’s a nun. She’s staying at ours at the moment. It will make up for the Xmas present I never got her.”

“Tight git,” Dave said with a laugh, “With all that money you could have got her something better than that.”

“Oh no this will do. I mean it’s not as if I like her or anything like that, she’s a self righteous bitch.”

“So what are you going to do with your share of the money anyway,” Dave said changing the subject.

“Same as I do with all my money get high.”

“Well I won’t argue with that,” Dave said and the festivities began. Back at Jacko’s the festivities were of a much lower affair.

“£80,” Siddy said, “We’ll have to take it easy.”

“Get a cheap bottle of whiskey and we should be alright it will make for a good start anyway.”

“I suppose so,” Siddy said and then thought awhile, “You know that Ma Kelly was known to have a drink.”

“Er, so?” Jacko said.

“There might be a bottle or two lying around the house,” Siddy said and then thought some more, “Yes, I remember now. I saw a bottle of whisky in the wall unit.”

“You should have brought it back with you.”

“Well what with one thing and another it slipped my mind.”

“Never mind we could always go back for it now that the panic is over.”

“I’m not sure about that the murderer always returns to the scene of the crime and all that.”

“Don’t be soft she isn’t supposed to be coming back for a few days yet,” and got up,” I won’t be too long,” and left the room. After five minutes he returned with two bottles, one full of whiskey and the other half full of brandy.

“Here you go,” he said, “That should sort us out for tonight.”

“Happy New Year,” Siddy said and fetched two glasses from the cupboard behind him. Jacko poured out two healthy measures and they both emptied their glasses in one go.

“God I needed that,” Siddy said, “What a day eh!”

“Well she deserved it, that bitch grassed my up to my mam for smoking when I was ten. I couldn’t walk for three days after the beating I got for it.”

“Yes she was a cantankerous old biddy. No I don’t think I will lose sleep over it.”

“Too right,” Jacko said as he poured out two more healthy measures, “Stay cool hang loose and admit nothing,” and started laughing.

“You reckon she’s got anything worth selling?”

“Doubt it besides you’ll get nothing for it from Davies and there would always be the chance of it coming back on us.”

“True, I wasn’t thinking straight.”

“Probably the brandy it sometimes has that effect,” and started laughing.

Meanwhile at Jake and Mary’s there was no festivities at all. Jake had sobered up

somewhat as the full extent of the predicament was coming home to roost. “No transport,” he said, “How the hell am I supposed to get a job now?”

“Something will turn up,” Mary said by way of consolation, “It always does.”

“Not this time,” Jake said for he was inconsolable, “That was the straw that broke the camel’s back.”

“Couldn’t you just fix it up surely the parts would be pretty easy to come by?”

“Doubt it the bike’s 25 year old and besides we’ve got no money. We’ve been living hand to mouth for the last few months.”

“That’s it then are you just giving up?”

“I don’t know, I’m not really in the right frame of mind to be talking about it. The way I’m feeling at the moment I just don’t see the point Maybe a good night’s sleep will sort it out but to tell you the truth Mary, at the moment ah fuck it.”

“That’s not like you Jake.”

“Maybe I’m just getting pissed off with making other people rich while we are just struggling to make ends meet. Something like having the bike wrecked put things into perspective. Where are we going wrong Mary? I’ve tried my best, I really have. But what’s the point. Bastard politicians and their minimum wage let them fuckers work for it and see how they get on. They’ve no concern for the workers. Labour huh don’t make me laugh. They are just middle class liberals who have high jacked the party. Running around with their heads up their arses I don’t know.”

“Things will pick up believe me.”

“Maybe Mary,” Jake said but in the mood he was in he did not really believe it, “Maybe.”

Sister Susan was sitting next to Shirley in the living room when Steve returned with blood shot eyes. “Merry Xmas aunty,” He said as he gave her the crucifix, “I’m sorry it was a bit late but I hadn’t quite got enough for it until now.”

She studied it and recognised it virtually straight away. “Stephen,” She said, “You shouldn’t have. £25, you can’t afford that.”

“Sorry?” Steve said as she had threw him slightly.

“I was going to buy this earlier but I could not afford it. God does indeed move in mysterious ways.”

“Oh, so you like it?”

“It’s the best present I have ever had.”

“So why the expression of pain anyway I’ve never seen one like that before.”

“Nor me,” She admitted, “Maybe it’s symbolic of purging your Soul through pain. I could not really say.”

“Right,” Steve said losing interest, “Anyway I’m glad that you liked it. I think I’ll get an early night if you don’t mind,” and went to bed.

After he had gone Sister Susan said to Shirley, “He’s a good lad Stephen. I think he’s restored my faith in human nature.”

“He’s been brought up right breeding always shows.”

Mean while time had moved on to 2 o clock in the morning and Dave had just woke up still a little high and very paranoid. He put his stereo on loud to try and settle him down but still the paranoia continued. He had worked out who the man who left the shop was and this unnerved him more than slightly. It was Andy Macintosh and he was not a man to be messed with. A local hood who had a reputation for violence and Dave had money that belonged to him. He held his Lugar to his chest and waited with baited breath.

Next door the music had awakened both Jake and Mary.

“What’s he playing at,” Mary said still half asleep, “Doesn’t he know that it is 2 in the morning?”

“I’ll soon tell him,” Jake said getting out of bed and quickly getting dressed.

Back at Dave’s the paranoia had not subsided, in fact if anything it was worse. Maybe the police were after him and they knew about the gun that he had? He had heard that in situations like that they were known to shoot first and ask questions later so his fear had escalated quite a lot. He took comfort from the fact he had a gun and had developed a you’ll never take me alive mentality enhanced by the drugs and the power that the gun seemed to give him. He was ready for anything now and he sensed that something was coming and coming pretty soon. He pointed the gun at the door and then waited with anticipation. His senses had picked up somewhat and he heard footsteps quickly approaching.

“Bang, bang, bang,” the door went but to Dave in his madness it was small arms fire.

“Bang, bang, bang,” Dave returned the fire and heard the thud of a falling body. “One down,” he thought and switching the music off waited to see what would happen next. Mary had heard the shots and had quickly got up and left the flat not thinking of the danger she could be in. Her only thoughts were about Jake and the danger he might be in. Quickly she ran to see what was happening and froze in shock as she stood over Jake’s dead body.

Dave on the other side of the door had heard the footsteps and wondered why they’d stopped. He was expecting the door to cave in at any moment and was ready should the event occur. He held his breath and wondered what was keeping the assailant. Seconds went past although they seemed like minutes and still nothing happened. Then he heard a voice, it was muffled and terse but he heard it just the same. It was Mary and she was saying, “No” over and over again but to Dave it sounded like a man saying, “Go, go, go.” And so he opened fire again and again. Another thud and another dead body but to Dave the battle was just beginning.

‘There must be quite a few of them’ He reasoned to himself and flipped the ammunition clip of the pistol. He checked to see how many rounds he had left and much to his horror he found out that he was down to his last one. He was surrounded and they were closing in on him. He knew that he was finished for they would not take kindly to him shooting their own. He was a cop killer and for that he was cursed to an instant death. He saw no way out and he knew what he had to do. He had one round left and after that he would be finished. He might be able to take out one more but that would have been it. No, that was not the way he intended to go. He put the barrel of the gun inside his mouth pointing upwards to his brain and said, “You’ll never take me alive copper,” and squeezed the trigger.

### **Chapter 3**

Noon the next day saw Andy knocking on John’s door for the third time.

“No answer?” A voice came from the white transit van that was parked on the road beside him.

“Does it look like it?” Andy said sharply, “Tell you what Mick, take a look around the back, he might be still asleep.”

“Sure thing,” Mick said and got out of the van.

After a couple of minutes Andy heard the snib of the lock and thought that John had finally surfaced. Much to his surprise it was Mick, "The back door was wide open, I think you should come and have a look."

Andy followed Mick inside and to John's lifeless body. As he looked at it he said, "Take a good look around Mick. I reckon I'm going to be down a couple of grand."

After ten minutes Mick came back and said, "Nothing doing man. He's been cleaned out for sure."

"Never mind," Andy said, "I'll take it in kind," and found the list on the wall unit, "This is the stuff that I paid for. We'll load it up and get out of the way before we have visitors."

Within five minutes the deed was done and Mick got into the driving seat, "Ready?" he said

"Just a minute," Andy said, "Something I've forgot," and went back inside again. He came after a few seconds and they quickly drove off.

Noon the next day saw Sidy waking up with a hangover. "Oh my head," he said, "I don't know why I bother."

"Because it's expected of you," Jacko said from the kitchen, "Kettles just boiled that should give you a restart."

"Cheers, God, what a state to get into. My head feels like a furnace. Oh thanks for letting us stop over by the way. I don't think my mam would have liked me going back in the state I was in last night."

"No problem," Jacko said as he gave Sidy a cup of tea, "I've got to nip off and see someone later and then we'll meet back here at seven."

"Sounds good to me I'll pick us up a bottle of whiskey and that should set us on our way."

They finished their drinks and both went their separate ways. Sidy back home and Jacko to see a man about a dog.

"Alright Jacko, how's it going?" Mick Macintosh said on his approach.

"Not too bad Mick well normal anyway."

"Bad then did you hear about that murder by the way?"

"The murder?" Jacko said shaking inside for he thought he meant Rosalind Kelly.

"Yes John Davies, he was hammered to death in his shop he was."

"No, that's news to me."

"Yes," Mick went on, "Me and Andy found him earlier. I don't even think that the police know about it yet."

"Really."

"It might be worth a look around; you never know what you might find."

"Maybe I was after a favour actually."

"Sure, well it depends on what you want."

"I'm after a lift into Colstown tonight. Save on the taxi fare as you'll know what they charge."

"No problem how does 8.30 sound?"

"Perfect thanks a lot."

"And Davies?"

"Well he was the fellow we used to sell to I wouldn't be able to get rid of it."

"I might be able to help you out there I've got one or two contacts myself."

“Why not me and you do it then split the profits between us.”

“What 60-40.”

“Well I was thinking 50-50.”

“My contacts and my van I reckon 60-40 sounds a bit more fairer.”

“Alright then.”

“What about Sidy?”

“Fuck him; I’ve been carrying him long enough so when do we do it?”

“Well now seems as good a time as any unless you have made other plans of course.”

“No when it comes to making money my diary is always open.”

They both got in the van and drove the short distance to John Davies shop. The street was quiet so they parked up close by and went in through the back door.

“Jesus,” Jacko said on seeing the body, “It looks like he took quite a hammering.”

“Never mind him let’s clear the living room. It looks like he’s kept the best stuff for himself.”

They quickly filled the van and took it to a lock up garage that Mick rented where they unloaded it. “I’ll see a few people and we’ll divvy up in a couple of days when it is sorted.”

“Sounds good to me,” Jacko said, “And not a word to Sidy as he might not look too kindly on it.”

“My lips are sealed do you want a lift back?”

“No thanks I could do with the walk. I’ll see you at 8.30 then. You’ll stop for a drink with us?”

“Well a quick one I don’t really want to be out late as I reckon the coppers will be stopping everything that moves.”

“You think that they would have better things to do.”

“I’m not complaining,” Mick said with a laugh, “It gives us real criminals time to play.”

“True,” Jacko said with a laugh, “I’ve never really thought about it in that way before.”

“Yes they can have the roads and we’ll have the houses, anyway I’ll catch you later,” and Jacko walked the short distance back home.

Jake and Mary’s bodies were discovered around about the same time and the police were quickly called. They put it down to a neighbourly dispute and suicide and pocketed the money found in Dave’s flat. As they were finishing up Steve came around the corner and saw them carrying the bodies out. He pretended not to know Dave and carried on his way wondering what actually happened though too afraid to ask. He reasoned that it would be in the papers soon so all he had to do was be patient. His aunt was also on walkabout. She was going to see the local priest to find out if he knew anything about the statue and so she carried it with her as she took a short cut along the canal. It was a nice day and she made quite good progress until she was stopped by a large heavily built man

“Where did you get that statue?” he barked.

“I would say that was my business,” She said unafraid, “Why do you want to know?”

“It was stolen from my mother’s,” Andy lied, somewhat taken aback by her lack of fear.

“Can’t be this one I got it from a second hand shop in Curzon Street.”

“John Davies.”

“Yes I think that was his name.”

“So let me get this right you bought it from a shop that was owned by John Davies?”

“Yes that’s right,” She said thinking him a simpleton, “Well my nephew did anyway.”

“Your nephew?”

“So it must be a different one that was stolen although for the life of me I can’t see there being another. He told me it came from a house clearance in Ordish Road.”

“Who, your nephew.”

“No John Davies,” she said as if she was talking to a child.

“And your nephew what’s his name?”

“That is no concern of yours now if you’ll excuse me I’ve got things to do,” and made to go past him.

“Not so fast,” Andy said blocking her path, “What’s your hurry? You still haven’t told me your nephews name yet.”

“Look I don’t know what your game is,” she said still unafraid, “But I haven’t time to play it.”

“You’re going nowhere. Not until you’ve told me what your nephews name is.”

“I’ll tell you nothing of the sort now stand aside or I will call the police.”

Andy struck her across the cheek and she fell heavily to the floor.

“His name.”

“Never,” She said and shouted, “Police, police.”

He pushed her head under the dirty water and held it for a few seconds before letting it up again, “Now give me his name.”

“Pol,” She shouted but before she got any further forward was submerged once again only this time for a little longer. He let her up once again only to push her down once more. When she came up this time she was a lot more forthcoming. “Stephen Allen,” she gasped, “Look what’s this all about?”

“I’ll ask the questions,” he said and submerged her for the final time. Andy kept the crucifix and left her floating face down to be diagnosed as an accidental death at a later date.

Seven o’clock arrived and Siddy came with the elixir of strife.

“First of the day,” he said as he poured out two healthy measures, “Have you ordered a taxi?”

“No, I don’t need to I’ve got us a lift down. I thought it would be cheaper. Mick Macintosh is picking us up at half eight.”

“Sound and did you hear about the shooting by the way?”

“Shooting?”

“Yes down Thurman road sounded like a domestic, husband and wife. O Toole I think the name was.”

“Can’t say that I know it so who shot who?”

“Oh no, nothing like that seems like they went around to complain about their neighbours loud music and he shot them both before turning his gun on himself.”

“Sounds a daft thing to do, who was he then, some sort of nutter?”

“I don’t know much about him. Nixon I think they said his name was David Nixon.”

“I knew him he used to knock around with a cousin of mine. I don’t know what he was doing with a gun though.”

“Pretty easy to get hold of nowadays I’ve heard you can even pick them up at schools.”

“So I’ve heard. Oh that John Davies took a hammering by the way. Seems that his place was turned over and he was killed, battered to death he was.”

“He deserved it the robbing bastard. In fact I reckon that if it wasn’t for him old Ma Kelly



would still be alive.”

“What?” Jacko said in surprise, “How do you work that one out?”

“Well if he’d have given us a decent price we would not have needed to go around and rob her.”

“I suppose that you could look at it that way,” Jacko said with a laugh, “Though it would not stand up in a court of law.”

“It works for me and that’s all that matters anyway are you ready for another then? If we’re not careful we could end up going out and still sober.”

Siddy poured out two more drinks and said, “You know the way things are going it might be a good idea to pick up a couple of guns for ourselves. It seems that things are going in that direction.”

“Might be something in that I mean if the likes of Dave Nixon has one I would say there was definitely a lot around. I ought to have a word with my cousin and find out where they got it.”

“Good idea I definitely think there is a need for self protection nowadays.”

“Yes it seems that things are going that direction. I’ll nip over and see him tomorrow and get a price on them.”

“Ah there’s the problem after tonight we will be potless.”

“Only temporarily and besides when we get a gun each it will open up a whole new avenue of potential income.”

“True,” Siddy said and finished the whiskey that was left in his glass. “Do you want another?”

“Yes go on, that should finish the bottle off,” and looked at the clock on the wall, “And well timed too. Mick should be here pretty soon.”

Siddy emptied the rest of the bottle out into the two glasses and said, “Here’s how,” and took a healthy draught. Jacko followed suit and said, “Hopefully next year it will be a lot brighter.”

“I’ll drink to that,” Siddy said and at that moment the door knocked.

“Punctual as ever,” Jacko said and went to let Mick in.

“Alright lads,” Mick said, “Are you fit?”

They finished the drinks and got in the van. As they drove the short distance to Colstown (of around 3 miles) Mick said, “Oh by the way does anyone know a fellow by the name of Steve Allen?”

“Steve,” Jacko said, “Yes I know him well. He’s my cousin actually.”

“Oh, so you know where he lives then?”

“Yes on Temple Street number 33, why do you ask?”

“Our kid was asking that’s all, probably got some work lined up for him. I’m not sure. He didn’t say.”

“Oh right. Well I don’t think he’s got a lot on at the moment if that’s any help.”

“Sound.” Mick said as they pulled up outside the Red Lion at Colstown, “This place any good to you?”

“Yes great,” Jacko said, “Are you coming in for a drink then? We owe you that much.”

“No it’s alright lads. I had better not risk it and besides I’ve got a couple of things that want doing.”

“Well fair enough but you are more than welcome,” Jacko said, “Thanks for that. I owe you one.”

“Any time, have a good night,” Mick said as he drove off and took out his mobile phone. Meanwhile news of Sister Susan’s demise had reached Steve and with that and his friend Dave’s death he was feeling more than slightly shaken. His mother Shirley had gone to officially identify the body and as he sat home alone he pondered on the situation. She had been a good swimmer and had won medals in her younger days so he was pretty confused as to why she should have drowned. He was also confused as to why she should be walking down there in the first place as it was pretty much of the beaten track. When all his rational had failed he turned to the super natural. Her death must have been suicide; it was the only explanation he could come up with. She must have taken her own life. It was the crucifix, it was cursed.

He thought back to Dave and his death and blamed it also on the crucifix though it came from a different standpoint. He had killed Davies with a hammer and incurred divine retribution in a ‘what you sow so shall you reap’ kind of thing. As he had taken the gun it incurred a ‘he who lives by the sword dies by the sword’ theme and this led to an interesting point. Steve had taken the crucifix. Did that mean he was destined to be a priest or something along those lines but why the expression of agony on Christ’s face? Did it mean that he was going to suffer pain, even death for those beliefs? His mind was in mild turmoil, enhanced by the liberal cocktail of drink and drugs he had taken to try and blot out the picture of his friend’s dead body from his mind. He was trying to analyse and merge different thought trains and getting nowhere. Why should his aunt have taken her own life? What had she done to warrant such retribution? Sure she was self righteous but according to Steve’s views so were most of the cloth. The Babylon whore would have been totally denuded if that was the case. He tried to grasp it all together and ended up with nothing, just a bad head-ache. After around twenty minutes of pointless deliberation he gave up. He reasoned that although he had the crucifix at one time he did not have it now and with it went the curse. It was around about then a voice said, “I believe this belonged to your aunt.”

#### **Chapter4**

Steve looked up in his drug induced to see two large heavily built men towering over him. Though that sight was frightening enough what really enhanced his fear was the fact that one of them was holding the statue that his thoughts had just been dwelling on. It had come back to haunt him and he knew that with it came pain. “Well,” the man holding the statue said knocking him off his thought train, “Did it?”

“Er yes,” Steve said trembling more than slightly inside, “Where did you get it from?”

“I’ll ask the questions,” Andy said and hit him hard across the face loosening two of his front teeth.

“Wait a moment,” Steve said as the haze was starting to lift, “I know you don’t I?”

“You might know of me,” Andy said and hit him once again, “But you don’t know me.”

“It was you in Davies shop.”

“Ah then you know what I’ve come for. That might save you a lot of pain. You see smack head when you robbed Davies you also robbed me. I don’t take kindly to being ripped off, not by no one and especially not by a smack head. I’ve got my reputation to think of,” and hit him once more to emphasis the point.

“But I haven’t got any money. It’s not here. It’s at Dave’s flat.”

Andy hit again for no real reason and said, “Dave who?”

“Dave Nixon.”

“Liar,” Andy said and hit him once again, “He was found dead this morning and guess what? He had no money. He was just a poor smack head with a gun.”

“No,” Steve said getting really scared as the predicament he was in was starting to come fully home to roost, “I swear that I left it at his place for safe keeping. I’m not going to be walking around with twenty grand on me.”

“Don’t try and take me for a cunt,” Andy said and hit him once more, “It’s very bad for your health.”

Turning to Mick Andy said, “Search his bed room and if nothing turns up try the rest of the upstairs. I’ll try and beat some sense into him in the meantime.”

Mick did as he was bid and Andy carried on with the assault.

Steve was getting somewhat numb to the pain by now and his mind had drifted off to higher things.

Was this some sort of divine retribution and were these men its agents, his Nemesis? He would have gladly given them the money but he did not have it. It had disappeared and along with it his chance of getting out of the mess. The irony was not lost on Steve and neither were the blows. After five minutes Mick came down and said, “Nothing doing upstairs. You want me to take a look downstairs?”

“No, hang on,” Andy said and thought awhile before saying, “We’ll take him to the farm where it is nice and quiet. I can do a real interrogation on him there. I don’t want to be hanging around here too long in case we have visitors.”

“Sure,” Mick said and Steve’s semi conscious body was dragged from the chair and unceremoniously loaded up into the back of the van where alone he could ponder on his fate and fate in general. Andy took the crucifix with him and cleaned the mess made by the interrogation as he did not want to leave a trace of evidence.

While all this was going on things were moving at the Red Lion. Siddy had bumped into an old school friend of his called Charlie and he proved very forthcoming, “You want a gun man, sure I can fix it. No problem at all.”

“Really,” Siddy said, “So how much are we talking about then?”

“Twenty bar man and as it’s you I’ll even throw in a clip of ammo. You want any more you just come and see me. I know a fellow who gets them from a gun club. .22 but man it still packs a punch.”

“£20,” Siddy said and looked at Jacko.

“I could get you something with a little more poke but it will cost a little more.”

“No,” Jacko said, “A 22 will be good enough.”

Siddy checked his finances and said, “How long will it take?”

“Ten minutes,” Charlie said with a shrug of the shoulders, “Just enough time to buy me a pint.”

“Sound good to me,” Jacko said and looking at Siddy, “What do you say?”

“Why not,” Siddy said, “Pint of Stella wasn’t it?”

“See you soon,” Charlie said and left the building.

“That saves a lot of hassle,” Jacko said after he had gone, “And we’ve still got forty quid well thirty five.”

“It’s still only ten o’clock,” Siddy said and thought awhile before saying, “I’ll tell you what, I’ll nip down to the offy and get a bottle of cheap whisky. That should make our finances last a little longer.”

“Well I won’t argue with that we can stick to coke for a bit then.”

Siddy went off and returned not long before Charlie. The deed was done and they found themselves the proud owners of a Rugar automatic.

The night wore on as did the beating at the farm.

“Where’s the money?” smack, “Don’t take me for an idiot,” punch, “Play ball and you might get out of this alive.”

“No, no,” Steve said, “I don’t know nothing.”

“Think you can hold out on me do you?” punch. “Think that when you get out of this you will be a rich man,” slap, “Well think again,” punch, “I am afraid that it does not quite work like that,” smack, “You see there might not be a chance of you leaving at all,” wallop, “You’re on your own,” smack, “Miles from anywhere,” slap, “Now listen to me and listen to me good,” punch, “You might not be leaving here at all,” smack, “Well not alive anyway,” wallop.

Whilst all this was happening Steve was somewhat immune from it. He felt the pain, sure he could not help but not to but he also felt a strange inner strength. Hatred for the man was carrying him. Hatred for the pain he was inflicting upon him. Hatred for the fact that this man had took it upon himself to be his Nemesis, hatred for the fact that this man must have killed his aunt. This hatred had given his mind in its madness a sharper edge and had numbed the pain from the numerous blows.

“Alright don’t hurt me no more I know where the money is.”

“About time,” Andy said content in the fact he thought he was broken, “You’re playing with the big boys now son. You’ll be wise never to forget it.”

“It’s not at the house it’s hidden not far from the shop. As I said earlier we did not want to be carrying that sort of money around.”

“Well, where is it?”

“It’s in an old hiding place we used to use. It will be hard to direct you to it though for it is well hidden.”

As this was going on things were more subdued at Colstown. Charlie had left them and they had moved to another pub. It was 11.30 and things were getting festive. Not so Jacko and Siddy though for having the gun had opened a whole new world to them. “I reckon we ought to do a few post offices,” Jacko said, “A few grand here and there we’ll soon be made.”

“That sounds a good idea are you ready for another whisky?”

“Sure,” Jacko said and had a quick look round to make sure they weren’t being watched, “We’re safe.”

Siddy quickly topped them up and said, “Or convenience stores, that’s another option.”

“Yes,” Jacko said with a laugh, “And pretty convenient too.”

“You know it’s weird but I feel sort of fulfilled now.”

“Must be the whisky,” Jacko said with a laugh.

“No man, I can see a chance of us having real money now. You know what I mean. No more trying to sell shoplifted goods, no more scraping around.”

“Yes right,” Jacko said not liking the depth of the conversation, “So what’s our finances like now?”

“About twenty quid,” Siddy said and checked his pockets, “No hang on about thirty.”

“Let’s hit another pub then. It will mean another three quid each but we can still afford it.”

“How does the Nags Head sound? I reckon it will be chocca.”

“Sounds good to me,” Jacko said and finished his drink. Sidy finished his and they both made their way out of the pub. This took a bit of time because the pub was crowded. They got on to the street and it was raining but as the Nag’s Head was just around the corner this did not concern them too much. There was no queue outside the pub so they paid and went straight in. They fought their way to the bar and got two pints of lager and tried to find a bit of space. The New Year rang in not long after and a good time was had by all. Half an hour passed and the festivities were coming to an end. The whisky was nearly finished and they were both well over the limit. They checked their finances and saw they had about£18 left and this put a dampener on the affair.

“I reckon we ought to head for home,” Jacko said, “The party’s over and it look like we’re leaving empty handed.”

“I thought I’d cracked it earlier. No I think you’re right. We ought to cut our loses.” They both left the Nag’s Head and on the street outside went to the nearest taxi rank. There was only one taxi and so they approached it.

“How much to Winston Campbell mate?” Jacko said to the driver.

“That will be £12 mate,” the driver said.

“What,” Sidy said, “Fuck that Jacko I’d rather walk.”

“But it’s pissing down.”

“We’ll get the next one; it’s got to be cheaper than that. At least Dick Turpin had the decency to wear a mask.”

“Have it your own way,” the driver said and the cab was quickly taken by a couple going back home to Cleominster. After the taxi had gone Jacko said, “I’m getting soaked, we should have taken that taxi we’d be nearly home by now.”

“Not at that price have you forgotten what we had to do to get it?”

“I just know that I am getting soaked. Look we’ve got some hard-ware now. Tomorrow we’ll start getting some real money, but today let’s just get home.”

“Alright but don’t you think that £12 was well out of order?”

“It’s New Years Eve they charge double; it’s a well known fact.”

“I know. I know but it’s supposed to be the season of good will and all that.”

“Business is business.”

“Yes, you’re right,” Sidy said and went deep into thought.

Back at the farm things had moved on and they were driving to Davies shop. The crucifix was on the dash board and Steve kept an eye on it.

“It’s in the old church,” he said, “Just down the road and take a right turn.”

“It had better be for my patience won’t hold out for much longer.”

“And then you’ll kill me won’t you?”

“We’ll see,” Andy said somewhat taken aback by the question, “Depends how much there is.”

“So my auntie you must have killed her.”

“Shut it,” Andy barked.

“No, no, you must have killed her, right.?”

Andy turned and hit Steve. His head bounced on the door frame behind him and he rebounded back. “You killed my aunt,” he said and lunged forward grabbing the statue and striking Andy over the head with it. The impact sent Andy back into Mick who lost control of the steering for a few seconds. Although only brief it was long enough to

throw his steering to the right and into the oncoming path of a juggernaut. The impact crumpled the front end of the van along with all its inhabitants. The only thing left intact was the crucifix.

As all this was happening things were moving on at Colstown too. A taxi had pulled up at the rank.

“How much to Winston Campbell mate,” Sidy said as both he and Jacko got in.

“£18 mate,” the driver said.

“What?” Jacko said, “The other fellow only wanted £12.”

Sidy took out a tenner and said, “Look here’s £10 take it or there’s nothing.”

“No, no, £18 the fare.”

“Alright then,” Sidy said.

“Money first or we go nowhere.”

Sidy fished in his pockets and brought out a handful of change. He counted it out and with the tenner it came to £18.52 so he said, “Keep the change.”

“What?” Jacko said wondering at the change of character.

“Business is business,” Sidy said looking at Jacko and then turning to the driver, “Could you take us to Elmsdon Road, just past the fire station?”

“Ok,” the driver said, “So you had a good night then?”

“Yes,” Sidy said, “Not bad, not bad at all. There was a lot of good will about.”

“Good,” the driver said not seeing the irony.

“And you?” Sidy said, “Much trade?”

“Plenty.”

“I’ll bet,” Sidy said with a smile.

The conversation was sparse for the rest of the journey it was only when they reached the destination did it pick up. “Right,” Sidy said producing the gun and pushing it firmly against the driver’s head, “I bet you’ve had a real good night tonight. It’s just a pity that you can’t keep hold of it.”

“What,” the driver said, “What is this?”

“A hold up what does it look like,” Sidy said as Jacko sat shocked in the back, “Give me all your money and who knows it might just save your life.”

“No, no,” the driver said, his panic now increased, “This is not happening.”

“I could take it anyway,” Sidy said and squeezed the trigger. The taxi driver fell forward and his head hit the steering wheel and activated the horn. Jacko quickly pulled him off and said, “What did you do that for?”

“He could have identified us,” Sidy said and grabbed what money he could find.

“£150,” he said after quickly reckoning it up, “He mustn’t have been out too long.”

“Teach him a lesson that will,” Jacko said, “Well would have done anyway. You should never get too greedy. What the fuck’s that?” and pointed through the car window.

Sidy quickly turned around to see a fusion of sparks and metal hurtling towards them.

“No,” he shouted but it was a waste of time. “No,” again and the fusion was complete.

## **The Tempest and the Fury-an Explanation**

Quite a diatribe to pick your way through really and not one that I would like to take on myself but I guess it's got to be done so let's make a start.

The story is centred around the crucifix and its motivational force is anger as opposed to love hence the agony on the cross which comes over as righteous indignation, Christ died for our sins kind of thing. It works on another level though. It was summed up by Dave when he said, "Well so would I be if some bastard nailed me to the cross." That's right I'm just giving it to you as it is. Look around and you will see that a lot of people can identify with the story. To some its reality while to others its imagination, a flight of fancy, no more. Your standard of living will define it so use it as your gauge. Now onto the story itself. As I said before its motivational force is anger so we're talking about God's reflected light. Right so now you are not angry any more you're just a little cross. (sorry about that but it's true.)

The cross came from Ordish Road or seeing knowing transformation (blessed with spiritual understanding) knowing sees Gods transformation or the spirit of knowing.

Basically you are what you know, that is your life.

So at the moment you are an impure soul but fear not as enlightenment is on its way.

John Davies or blessed seeing spirit (light transformation) Gods love blessed through understanding. The Holy Spirit but as his name has not been mentioned yet it's not on your conscious level so you need a little understanding. Susan or understanding love, understanding Gods light although she's not quite rich enough to register so she still has a little way to travel. So a quick recap then, the cross is life and John Davies is love or the first level of understanding a being with the ability to create, flora and basic fauna and Susan is understanding or the second level that's found in animals.

Okay we'll have the next level later as the story deviates here as I had to lay the seeds first. David Nixon is the spirit of discernment it stands for transformed to God's love (blessed transformation) light blessed with insight sees light and Stephen Allen the spirit of knowing and stands for understanding wisdom and the spiritual word through light of God, God's purpose (God's purpose through light). Jake O' Toole stands for blessed with work through seeing wisdom seen (seeing Gods purpose through) or a spiritual life which is married to Mary or a life of God knowing blessing and all that moaning? Well I had to suffer it so must you. (just don't get me started on the bike again, light fingered bastards.) Timothy Siddels or wisdom blessed with life sees spiritual wisdom blessed with understanding (blessed by transformation) transformation through Gods purpose understood, the higher self or spirit of life. Samuel Jackson or understanding Gods life (love of God) Gods purpose blesses Gods will of work (understanding sees light) the sleeping conscious or the spirit of love. Andy we'll get to later.

Now level 3 kicks in at the same time as Level 4 and evolution now takes place on 2 levels. The Lugar stands for Gods purpose-loving will of Gods knowing. Level 3 the spirit of discernment and Level 4 the spirit of wisdom. So you are now cross and with a gun. This happened when John Davies shop was broken into.

Level 5 is a spiritual life when Jakes bike was found it was symbolic of this for the bike is symbolic of a channel to the divine which guides a spiritual life. As it had no headlight or clocks, it lacked direction and had no real purpose. It gets it though knowledge of the divine or a life of God knowing blessing. Level 6 is a mergence of spirits and this happened when Steve gave Susan the crucifix and Level 7 when Dave (physical will)

died and was taken away by the police (collective conscious) who also took his money (knowledge). Dave took a spiritual life (Jake) and also got the spirit of knowing (Level 8) through a channel to the divine (Mary)

Level 9 happened when Andy took the crucifix from Susan and her baptism means she got a purpose for Andrew Macintosh stands for Gods light transformation known through love, a life of Gods will of work blessed with light (wisdom sees spiritual understanding) you get a purpose and Level 10 when the taxi driver got shot for it stands for wisdom of Gods insight-blessed with transformation knowing blesses love through knowing or basically loving spiritual wisdom

Now onto the crash, it was the final mержence when God (the van) which held Andy, Mick, Steve and the crucifix or the spirits of understanding (through Susan), purpose, wisdom and knowing hits the word (taxi) that held Sidy, Jacko and the taxi driver or the spirits of life, love and insight. This was done through the juggernaut or a blessed loving will-will through knowing light (Gods loving wisdom) well that's the basic skeleton but you can still get a lot of meat from it if you're that way inclined

### **Back cover to History-Well Here's Mine**

Creation is a self written book that can only be defined on completion in much the same way as Nostradamus' predictions. It is ongoing but as we are getting pretty close I thought I might have a stab.

Natural law says that everything must evolve to its purpose and that purpose is another law and that law it that everything must find its place in the eco system. If you look around the natural world today you'll see that's pretty much the case. Giraffes will not evolve taller for they have fulfilled their purpose, their purpose being to be able to reach the higher leaves of the trees. They have achieved perfection for they are perfect for their purpose. The rest of the animal kingdom is pretty much the same so their creation is self fulfilled, they have evolved to their purpose, their perfection. Sounds simplistic some might even say naïve but it's the truth pure and simple. Now like any book there will be a main story and a few sub plots to aid its development. The main story being to evolve and the sub plots, the other seven natural laws (see inside for details).these are what Creation hooks on for like any mind it needs direction and boundaries in which to work. Through these seven laws and over many, many generations for Creation is timeless we evolve to perfection and then our evolution is complete. Creation does not personify for death is part of its regeneration. One generation must die for another more evolved generation to take over in the same way a snake sheds its skin to grow on a mental level and for reasons of space and over population on a physical. If we did not have death in a land of time we would quickly run out of space. If we were to personify Creation it would be a mother goose tending its seven chicks waiting patiently for them to grow.

And where does man fit in with creation? He is or will be, when he achieves his purpose and recognises his responsibilities the last word



