

The Cave

Chapter 1

Enyll awoke, he looked at his clock it was his 17 birthday. He had stayed up late thinking about the cave, as he couldn't sleep. Enyll and Asa would finally be allowed to enter as they were now 17 years old the minimum age required to explore past The Maw. They had already talked to the delvemaster and they were allowed to go on a 2-week expedition down to 1,000 meters deep and back up in just two days. Now Enyll hadn't been staying up all night doing just anything mind you. He had been studying books about the caves ecosystems, Flora and Fauna, the history of the Cave, and much more. he had always been fascinated with its wonders; how life could not just survive but flourish in the deep, and how vast ecosystems existed in its immense depths.

Enyll walked out of his room and across the hallway to his sister's room.

"Asa" Enyll whispered as he shook her gently.

"What?" she replied groggily.

"It's our birthday," Enyll said. Asa's eyes widened.

"Well, what are you waiting for let's go. We need to go to the guildhall to get certificates" Asa said enthusiastically as she got out of bed to get dressed she looked at Enyll laughing, and said, "and put on a shirt En, come on".

"Ok, ok," Enyll said running to his room to find the garment.

After the two of them came down the small steps to the dining room Tylka said "would you two like a quick, or slow breakfast?".

"Quick!" they both said together.

Laughing Tylka said "I thought so" she preceded to give them leftovers from yesterday's dinner.

"Oh, before you two leave for the guildhall I have a gift for both of you. I'll be right back" said Tylka as she opened the door to the basement.

A minute later she came back placing a plain wooden box on the table she said: "This was left to me by your father before he left on his final expedition. I haven't opened it but I know it contains your father's expedition journal."

Enyll and Asa looked at each other. Enyll moved his plate out of the way and reached forward to grab the box. Asa got up and walked around the table to stand next to Enyll as he opened the box. Inside there was a note.

"What's it say?" asked Asa. Enyll unfolded the paper and cleared his throat

"I hope that this box has found its way to you on your 17th birthday and if that is the case happy birthday to both of you. I fear that I have discovered something concerning deep in the belly of the cave. I want to stay here with you, but I must go now, I made a promise. I wish to bring you with me but I do not want to put you through that and god knows what your mother would have thought of me bringing you into the cave. So I will leave my journal here with you so if you decide to follow me, to know the truth of the cave you have lived your whole life above you can follow in my steps. To Enyll, I leave my depth gauge I hope it will serve you well, and to Asa, I leave my expedition knife it has served me well and I hope it will do the same for you. To both of you, I leave my expedition journal it contains years of research use it well. I hope I will see both of you again, but if I don't return just know, I love you."

Tears welled to the corners of Asa's eyes when Enyll stopped reading.

"I can't believe this," said Enyll as he picked up the depth gauge shaped like a stopwatch. Asa picked up the sheathed bowie knife.

"Aunt Tylka could we have some privacy please," said Enyll "of course dears, I have some errands I need to run anyway," she said as she left the room As soon as she left Enyll states

"We have to go help him".

"What" replied Aas

"We can't go that deep yet!"

Enyll replied, "We have to Asa, dad needs us!"

Asa seemed conflicted. She loved her father deeply and wanted to help him, but not if they died trying.

Enyll points to the letter and says "Please, we can go on the exploration mission and when we reach the deepest point we leave and continue downward."

"That would be suicide!" retorted Asa.

Enyll replied "But we have dad's journal. It has all of the information on how dad got that deep the first time. We are Alstons we can do this. He needs us, please"

"Damit," said Asa

"Yes!" Enyll yelled with glee

"But if I am coming we need to get prepared we have two days before the expedition leaves we need to go through dad's journal to make sure we can do this if it seems plausible we will continue. Only then will I go" Asa said with a smile creeping on to her face.

"Ok, let's go to the guildhall now and get out licenses for the expedition," Enyll said,

"Ok, let me get my coat."

Chapter 2

It had been two days and Asa and Enyll were standing on the elevator ready to descend into the maw of the cave. The elevator creaked under the weight of the eight people it held within as it started it's decent. Enyll looked at the depth gauge. Its intricate mechanisms whirred to life as it's three needles started to move. "10, 20, 30" Enyll could feel the cold damp air rushing past. "40, 50, 60". Asa's and Enyll's eyes met, they were both grinning. "70, 80, 90, 100" The elevator hit the bottom abruptly. It's doors slid apart with a screech and Enyll and Asa stepped out taking their first steps into the maw of the cave.

Asa looked up at the sky above as they went to join the group. Enyll walked up to Asa and said, "So the plan is to tag along with is group until we reach the extent of the depth they are planning to go then we ditch them, and try to escape before they catch us."

"Yep" replied Asa staring at the almost perfectly circular walls of the cave's maw. "That's the plan, I wonder if Tyka has found the note we left her yet"

"I hope not," chuckled Enyll nervously "we need to get a bit farther before someone figures out our plan"

The two teenagers went up to the expedition leader who had introduced himself on the surface as Yarde Sorenson. He was an experienced delver of the cave and frequently took newbies on expeditions with him. Today was no different. He did rollcall of everyone, 10 in total, and once he was sure everyone was there he said

"Ok, let's not waste more time. Let's go!" and with those words, we set off.

Their group walked through the narrow passages as they went Enyll's and Asa's were glued to the phosphorescent stone on the walls known as Blaze stone for its eerie orange glow. They

also noticed many other strange and fantastic plants. They also occasionally saw a glimpse of a tail or leg darting just out of view.

As they were observing this Yarde walked up to them and said "Hey there kiddos. Is this your first time down here."

Enyll pulled his eyes from the cave's wonders to answer and said

"Yes, My sister and I just recently turned 17, and we wanted to follow in our father's footsteps. So here we are."

"Oh, whose your old man? I might know him." Yarde responded.

Enyll said "My dad's name is Fenron Alston"

"Oh, your Alston's kid he always talked about you and your sister." said Yarde

"Really?" exclaimed Enyll

"O, yes he always talked about you two," said Yarde chuckling. Enyll thought about this as they walked to their first spot to camp.

The days passed as they waited for the deepest part that the expedition would take them. In the meantime, Enyll continued reading their father's journal and after cross-referencing it with some of the other explorer's books and knowledge realized that many of the creatures mentioned in it were unknown to the others and was likely that they were first discovered by their father. Asa, however, took to training with the knife given to her by their father and was sparing with some of the other explorers whenever she got the chance.

Soon they reach the halfway point of their planned expedition and knew it was time to leave they had picked up as much knowledge as they could over the last week of descending. They were at a depth of only 950 meters as the main point of this expedition was not depth but to further explore the second layer known as The Doorway Beneath which is between 100 and 1000 meters deep. They also heard to gather resources unique to the cave such as certain plants that could be used to create powerful heal salves and fluorescent rocks that would stay lit only in the cave but had many other uses outside of the cave.

That night Enyll and Asa took the food rations meant for them and some of the extra rations enough to last for about two weeks. They also took emergency survival packs and extra of everything they could. They wrote a note to their fellow explorers telling them they were sorry along with some of their money, enough to pay for what they had taken. They sneak away from the base careful not to wake everyone. With a final goodbye to the only humans they might see in a long time, they walked to the tunnel down and as Enyll glanced at his depth gage the needle passed 1000 meters as the small enclosed passage opened to an impossibly large space in the

cave it is known as The Underground Forest. Asa gasped at the beauty of the cavern, its walls, and ceiling scattered with streaks of fluorescent rocks, giving a bright and ethereal glow to the previously dim cave before. They both walked out into the forest knowing many dangerous monsters live in this forest's domain and they would have to be extremely careful moving forward.

Chapter 3

Asa and Enyll set up their collapsible tent, as Yarde had shown them, for the night. They had hidden it in some of the forests large fungi stalks which had been hollowed out by creatures as a nest then but were then abandoned. The Underground Forest is mostly comprised of large fungi the largest of which can be over 100 meters tall. It also contains what appears to be petrified trees of an unknown species and much other strange flora. Enyll and Asa plan to venture down to the next layer as soon as possible as they are most likely being chased by other more experienced explorers who plan to bring them back before they get killed or worse by the creatures in the Underground Forest and beyond.

Asa woke to the eerie glow of the forest's floor as streams of light preceded the gaps in the canopy of mushroom caps.

She shook Enyll awake saying "Come on bro, get up. We have to go."

"Ok, ok, I'm up" he grunted half asleep. "I will go to try to find some food, dad's journal has lists of edible mushrooms from this layer. I should be able to find some. We want to be able to conserve our food supply as long as possible" stated Enyll.

"Ok, I will pack up camp while you're gone. Please be careful" she said.

"Aren't I always," he said with a grin as he grabbed his pack with the journal in it as he walked from their camp. Asa shook her head and smiled as she watched him leave. Her face showing signs of worry. She had felt uneasy ever since they had left yesterday. Nothing had gone wrong yet, everything was going smoothly, almost too smoothly. She knew it was dangerous down here. Some of their dad's close friends she had known came down here and never came back she hopes they would not meet the same fate.

20 minutes later Enyll came back with a small bag of mushrooms they quickly cooked them and finished packing up and continued their journey downward.

They had been walking for 2 hours when Enyll stated proudly "We have just passed 1500 meters deep!" "Good," said Asa "the other explorers won't look for us this deep. We will be considered dead in a few days back on the surface."

"I hope Tylka won't worry too much about us, I hope she will understand," said Enyll

"Me too" replied Asa.

As they were talking they both failed to hear the large spider-like creature above them as it glided from stalk to stalk. It descended from the canopy with unearthly stealth. It had 8 disproportionally long spindly legs ending claws that gripped the stalks. As it stalked them it grabbed a rotten peace of a stalk and stumbled. This made some noise Asa looked to see what made the sound her eyes widened in horror when she saw the abomination hunting them. She fought the urge to scream as it would only alert other things in the area. She grabbed Enyll and chocked about the words

"Run!" as the color drained from her face.

Enyll looked back and started to run as he couldn't believe what was behind them. The spider or whatever that thing was made a horrendous noise as started to chase them, not keen on losing its next meal. It dropped to the floor with a dreadful thud it then began to run at them. They were not faster than it as they quickly found out. They bolted through the forest looking for somewhere to hide. Enyll pulled at the holster on his waist where he had stashed the pistol. He pulled it out and shot a bullet blindly backward. It grazed the creature. It screeched in rage and trust out one of its legs at him. He ducked and moved to the side as the leg's claw closed on the air above him. Ahead he saw a cliff and yelled to Asa to head there and set up a rope to repel while he distracted it. She ran to the cliff the monster seemed to want to follow her but Enyll shot it again this time landing a direct hit. Sadly, it did not seem to mind as it appeared only angrier. He lead it in a circle, dodging its claws, and whenever it got too close he would fire a shot at it. He saw Asa waving and screaming at him to come to the cliff he changed his direction and ran straight for her she started to descend. When Enyll got close he slid to the edge and as he went over grasped the rope and slid down. Just as he thought they were safe the creature started to climb down the cliff he fumbled for the gun as he did so a different appendage emerged from the creature He saw it move toward Asa he screamed "Look out!" as it stabbed her raised arm. She screamed in pain rage filed Enyll's vison he aimed his pistol at the creature and fired. The expert shot blew threw the creature's head. It soon went limp and plummeted toward the bottom of the cliff.

Chapter 4

Enyll quickly descended to Asa. She was griping her arm her face contorted in pain.

"We, need to get to the bottom of this cliff so I can treat you. Can you descend on your own?" said Enyll looking at his sister's arm.

Asa nodded with her eyes closed. It creature had priced trough her jacket and it was bleeding rapidly.

"Wait," said Enyll "I need to stop the bleeding."

He cut off some loose fabric from his shirt and wrapped it around his sister's arm to slow the bleeding. They started to slowly descend after 10 minutes they made it to the bottom where Enyll proceeded to treat her. They had both received medical training as a part of their certification to enter the cave. He put a bandage over her arm and poured a disinfectant over the wound it appeared as if she would not die from the bleeding but there was still whatever the monster had injected into her. He had seen something like this in the beast compendium supplied by the delver's guild he frantically flipped through the pages looking for it he stumbled upon it. It was called the Shadowflayer. He skipped past the description looking for the effects of the Shadowflayer's poison, then he found it.

It read: *"The Shadowflayer's 9th appendage often referred to as a tail contains deadly poison in the Aculeus. There is currently no known cure. Avoid this creature's sting at all costs. If a human is stung they will not die for at least two or three weeks, as the Shadowflayer will wait to eat its prey for weeks until it becomes hungry. But even when a person has been brought to the surface they have always died shortly after. There are three stages to the poison it will first weaken the affected it will be hard for them to walk, then after about a week and a half the person will enter a coma where they can stay for a week or two, after this, they will soon start to die a painful death as they experience mass internal hemorrhaging."*

Enyll looked again, nowhere did it say anything about a cure or a treatment.

While Enyll was looking for a cure Asa said "Hey, what if they know how to help me at the surface"

Enyll replied with a snap "They won't know I bought this book from the guild it contains the most recent knowledge of the cave, and it says that there is no known cure."

"but what if they found a cure since we have been down here or that book wasn't as recent as you thought, or, or, what if they know something we don't," said Asa who was breaking down to tears.

She started to sob uncontrollably. "Asa," said Enyll firmly "don't worry. I will find a cure there are many secrets down here there must be some animal that has adapted a resistance to the Shadowflayer's poison or some other way to cure you." after a pause he continued "I will find a way to cure you.

Whatever it takes, I'll find it." Asa seemed reassured by this.

Enyll set up camp at the base of the cliff and began to look through their father's journal to see if there was hope for Asa. Enyll desperately searched knowing full well the consequences of not finding the cure. After two hours of flipping the ragged pages and rereading sections, he came across in the creature that their father had encountered on his way down. It read:

"I came across this creature by sheer luck, but what I saw amazed me it was slashed by a Mulvouc's claw's and escaped. I expected the creature to die soon as a Mulvouc's poison is normally a death sentence to any animal unlucky enough to be grazed by its claws, but the creature, which I have named the Nobuyuki, did not appear to die or be affected by the poison. I will need to come back to study this creature more, as further research could lead to antidotes to many other positions and venoms."

Enyll with his eyes wide thought about the Nobuyuki, if he could bring a sample of the Shadowlayer's poison to a Nobuyuki and inject it may be possible to create an antidote. The only problem was that their father only encountered the Nobuyuki once at just over 8500 meters. Enyll checked the depth gauge. He was surprised at how deep the chase had brought at just under 2100 meters deep. That meant that they would need to descend over 6,000 meters in less than two weeks, and with the state of Asa, he did not know if they could make it. But he had no choice they would make. Even if he had to go 10,000 meters he would do it. For his sister anything.

The next morning he informed his sister who was at first overjoyed until she heard how deep the Nobuyuki was last found at

"8,500 meters!" she yelled that's insane "I'll be dead by the time we make it that deep"

"We will have to find a quicker way down" said Enyll determined. "We should be able to cut through the Deep Well." said Enyll

"The Deep Well!" said Asa wide-eyed

"We have no choice if we want to make it that deep that fast" replied Enyll.

"Ok, what's the plan," said Asa tentatively.

"We both know that the safest way through the 4th layer is via the caves on the outside of the Well, but if we can capture a Urode, the floatation pouches they use fly should be able to carry us down the center and travel over 2500 meters down in under a minute," explained Enyll.

"That's crazy, but it might work and we don't have a choice... Ok, let's do it"

"Alright I'll go find some Urode there should be some floating around the lake." said Enyll

"Ok, me too" Replied Asa.

A few hours later Enyll came back with a slain Urode behind him and began to carefully remove the delicate floatation pouches from its corpse. Twenty minutes later Asa stumbled into camp with a slightly smaller Urode.

"Are you alright?" asked Enyll concerned as he walked to help her to camp

"No, but we don't have time for that"

One hour later the twins were standing on the edge of the deep pit into which they planned to jump.

"Are you ready?" asked Asa who was shaking with fear

"Y-Yeah," said Enyll.

"Then let's, Go!" shouted Asa as she jumped she was followed by Enyll shortly after. As they descended they could feel

Chapter 5

As they descended they could feel the damp air of the deep well passing by their faces. Enyll checked his depth gauge 2,200 . . . 2,300 . . . 2,400. They were descending fast but not too fast Enyll looked up to the air sac slowing his fall inspecting its surface and seeing the thin membrane keeping him alive. Asa was equally as worried, if not more so.

Asa looked at the smooth walls of the deep well that had been worn smooth by erosion. She could see the rate of their fall they were falling fast but below the exit of the Deep Well, there was supposed to be a large moss and mushroom pile covering the bodies of creatures that have fallen. She dearly hoped that it would be soft enough. She voiced her concerns to Enyll saying,

"Hey, Do you think we are falling to fast?"

Enyll responded "No, We'll be alright" She could hear the fear in his voice but said noting only hoping he was right.

Enyll looked at his depth gauge once more it read 3,900. He looked down expectantly waiting to see the bottom as he's only 700 meters away from the bottom he looked at the air sac that held his sister, hoping it would hold. He looked down the bottom came into sight a mass of moss and large mushrooms came into sight. He checked the depth gauge one last time the needle was in between 4,500 and 4,600

"Get ready!" he shouted.

They both fell roughly onto the pile dead plants and animals that had met the unfortunate fate of falling into the deep well.

"Ugg" Asa groaned as her hand pushed through the rib cage of a long-dead unknown creature.

“What even is that” exclaimed Enyll.

“How would I know” Asa retorted.

Enyll reached down to pull the depth gauge from where it had fallen. “4564 meters,” he said

“No going back now,” said Asa “we wouldn’t even know how anymore. We certainly can’t climb back up that”.

“Yeah, that’s for sure. Only one way to go,”

“Down,” they said in unison.

The Pair of them started their way down the first passage that appeared to have a small stream flowing down its center as that usually indicated the passage would continue downward. The Passage was lit by small glowing insects on the ceiling which gave of a soft green light. After they had been walking through this passage for about an hour Asa said she needed to catch her breath for a minute.

“Are you sure you’re alright?” Enyll asked concerned.

“Yeah, I just need to catch my” she stopped talking mid-sentence and pointed to a strange-looking device that hung from the ceiling a bit further ahead.

“What’s that,” she said after a moment

“Enyll followed her finger to the contraption

“Looks like a trap, and an old one at that. I saw it in dad’s journal, it’s supposed to catch some of the large flying insects that live this deep in the cave, and from the looks of it it hasn’t been set in a month or two”

As Asa looked closer she could see a leg of some animal hanging from the inside but it was stripped down to the bone and what little flesh remained was rotting away.

After this stop, Enyll and Asa continued down into the depths of the cave determined to find a Nobuyuki.

Chapter 6

As they continue downward they saw many strange animals and creatures and they also spotted more of the traps and other signs of human activity that appeared to be more recent.

"Enyll," said Asa as they crossed the small river flowing the cave

"I feel like something has been watching us"

"Yeah, me too" replied Enyll "I'll see something looking at us from one of the other passages but it will always go away before I can see it, and the light is too dark to follow it" Enyll lifted the depth gauge from his pocket It read 7,500 m.

"we're getting closer to where Nobuyuki can be found only another day or two before we can cure you," said Enyll reassuringly.

"I sure hope that the cure will work" Asa replied with a sigh "I can feel myself getting weaker by the day, it won't be long before I won't have the strength to walk anymore".

"We'll find it, don't worry" replied Enyll

As they continue their quest further down into the abyss of the cave they come across an abandoned campsite with makeshift defenses surrounding it.

Enyll checked the depth gauge "8,000 meters" said Enyll "Camping down this far can be dangerous if you stay for a long time"

"Yeah, we're lucky nothings happened yet," said Asa "it's almost a little eerie how quiet it has been"

"Are you ready to keep descending?" asked Enyll

"Y-yeah" Asa they started to walk but they hadn't gone very far before Enyll heard a thud behind him. He turned around and saw his sister on the cave floor.

"Asa!" he exclaimed as he ran back to her beads of sweat clang to her cold forehead

"Enyll" she whispered "I don't know if I can go on to much longer. I have felt myself becoming weaker and weaker these past few days, I think I might die" She said through tears.

"Don't worry, everything will be fine" said Enyll who was trying to stay strong for his sister.

Enyll found a bedroll in the abandoned camp and layed Asa down in it he made sure she had plenty of food and collected water for her. She seemed to be alright but her condition was only getting worse as time went by. He looked at Asa then determination filled his body. He was so close to the cure only 500 meters! He could make it down there and find one. He had too. He had to tell Asa.

“Asa, I have to go and find the Nobuyuki, it’s only 500 meters down from here,” Enyll said with a determined look in his eyes

“No, you can’t there could be a monster, please we tried to save me it’s not your fault, please for my sake, give up in me go back to the surface you can still live. The farther you descend the more monsters there are. Why do you think this camp was abandoned they probably died down here. Please live, for me.” Asa started to cry when saying this and by the end, she was almost yelling at Enyll. Enyll sat there looking at his sister with tears in his eyes.

“I can’t live knowing I could have saved you, I won’t let you die down here! Please just give me one chance we came this far, I can’t give up on you.” Enyll said. He was not crying his voice was set with steely determination. With that Enyll rose and walked to the exit of the makeshift walls of the camp.

“I love you.” was the last thing Asa heard as she stared at her only brother as he closed the walls behind him.

Chapter 7

Enyll left the once-abandoned campsite, hoping his efforts would not be in vain. He tried not to think about what would happen if he failed. He walked through passages being careful to remember where he came from so he could find his way back to Asa should he succeed. As he walked through the empty caverns he could feel the cold and foreboding atmosphere, and the strange sounds he could hear seemingly just out of sight made him wish that he had his sister there with him.

Enyll checked his father’s old depth gauge, the needle pointed to 8,050 m. He swore out loud, He would never make it back with a cure at this rate. It had already been two hours since he had left the camp, and he had not found any signs of the Nobuyuki.

He began to move quicker through the cavern’s endless passageways for any sign of the elusive creature. He began to make more noise, he knew it was dangerous and he would be no use dead to Asa, but if he didn’t make it back in time she would die in pain and alone anyway. He took reckless risks. He did not carefully check his surrounding for deadly creatures instead he rushed past desperately in hopes that he might find something, to help Asa.

He moved so quickly and recklessly he failed to notice the dark mass behind him.

Enyll awoke, the last thing he could remember was looking at a passage in the journal and comparing it to some markings on the wall to see if he was headed in the right direction.

But why was he here? And why was he upside down? He tried to move and found his arms restrained he looked around, saw the faint outline of a web illuminated from his headlamp which

was over 20 meters below him. Enyll could hear strange and alien noises coming from below him. He tried to wiggle free but to no avail.

After what seemed like forever with his attempts at escaping befoing weaker and weaker, he heard a strange clicking noise seeming to emanate from everywhere, and when he looked around he could finally see the creature which had captured him. This creature was an abomination and on sight, Enyll gaged and tried even harder to escape his organic prison. However, the monster did not move toward him but glided to one side of the chamber seeming to search for the noise. It then left its lair. Enyll then heard a sawing noise from above him and as he strained to look up he felt whatever was holding him on the ceiling give way and he fell downward. He did not scream on the way down and hoped the fall would kill him as it would surely be a more merciful death then whatever that thing had planned for him.

Chapter 8

Enyll stirred for the second time that day from forcefully induced sleep and saw above him a figure above him dragging his limp body and a sled through the many maze-like passageways. He must have made a sound as the mysterious man said

“Hey there, you’ve been through quite an ordeal just rest up.” The man’s voice was gruff and sounded as if he had not spoken in a long time.

“Asa” Enyll croaked

“She needs help”

The man then interrupted him and replied “Asa will be fine, I already gave her the medicine she needed”

“What” Enyll expressed in surprise.

Enyll tried to stand up but quickly fell back on the sled as the man pulled it. Enyll grabbed his head in pain as he could feel the discomfort at being knocked out twice in a day felt like. Just as Enyll was about to ask the man were they were going, Enyll saw the glow from the abandoned camp that he and Asa had found before.

“Asa” he breathed

“Yes” replied the man in his gruff voice “We are almost there just hold on a little bit longer”

Enyll remained quiet as he was pulled into the camp he had left full of determination earlier. It looked much the same except for the rather large and worn pack in the center of the small camp. Enyll also saw the sight which he earlier that day feared he would never see again, his sister’s smile. He greeted her smile with one of his own she ran forward and embraced him.

After some time the man said “Alright, enough with the reunion. We both have some explaining to do I believe. Firstly my name, and I am sure will come as a bit of a shock, is Fenron Alston, your father”

As it tured out this man was right, this news did come as a shock, they had almost forgotten why they came down here in the first place. Now the man the had come looking for was standing right in front of them.

Over the next hours, they all sat happily in the camp as a family. Asa soon broached the topic that both of them had been wondering of. How?

“Dad,” Asa inquired “how, are you still alive, down here”

Fenron gave a hearty laugh “Well, that’s not too important, but what is, I think more interesting is Why.”

“Why?” Enyll said

“Yes, Why, why did I stay down here, all these years and not go to the surface to take care of you two” as he said this he ruffled both of their heads

“I came down here to complete my research as I had discovered something that deeply intrigued me. I decided to leave to conduct my research down here, well actually a bit deeper than where we are now, but I am up here to get some of the poison from a kind of moss that I have only found up here. Anyway, I had discovered evidence of complex life down here in the form of runes”

As he said this he showed a picture of many runes in his journal

“These runes hinted at some kind of gate at deep in the bowels of these caverns, and I have found something deep in this death cave that confirms my findings” I will take you there. If you want of course, do you?”

“Yes!” shouted Enyll

“Ok,” replied Asa hesitantly

Chapter 9

Over the next couple of days Enyll, Asa, and Fenron descended into the cave. Enyll’s depth gauge soon read over 10,000 m. When they finally stopped their continued decent the gauge

read over 13,000 m. They reach a small outpost that appeared to have been set up by more than just one man.

“Wow” Enyll expressed in awe at the large chamber they had walked into”

The small outpost was at the entrance of a huge chamber with its walls extending into the air the ceiling was not dark but a bright collection of an odd mesmerizing fluid that emitted enough light that the underground chamber was lit as brightly as a sunny day.

Asa squinted at the sheer amount of light that they had not seen since their days on the surface.

“What is this place?” Asa asked

“This,” said Fenron, as he gestured to the cavern “is why I stayed down here all this time.”

“What is that?” Enyll awed as he pointed to the far wall of the great underground space

A large gate extending over one hundred meters high stood on the far wall. It was engraved with many large strange symbols. There where also ruins of pillars and other strange structures in this place.

“I have been trying to understand the purpose of these structures, but most of all the gate. I have been unable to pass through the veil at its entrance”

The three of them dropped their small belonging off in the camp and made their way to the gate, as they walked they passed strange plants and tree-like growths there was a small river and they crossed it with an ancient bridge that was made in the same way that the other structures were made after about fifteen minutes of walking they made their way to the massive gate. It towered over them gargantuan pillars stood flanking it.

There was a strange mist covering the entirety of the gate. The veil of mist gave off a warm golden glow that seemed welcoming.

Fenron walked up to the veil and pressed his hand against. Where his hand came close the mist seemed to solidify and harden into a surface that Fenron could not pass.

“I have tried all I could to pass this barrier, but these ancient people’s technology has eluded me for so long” a weird, almost creepy smile grew on his face “why don’t you try to cross the veil?”

Something about the way he said this made Asa concerned, but Enyll did not seem to notice or care. He began to walk toward the veil.

“Yeah” said Enyll as he grabbed his sister’s hand and began to walk to the veil

“Enyll” Asa hissed “what are you doing we don’t know what this even is”

“It’s perfectly safe, trust me,” Fenron said quickly

“Yeah, Asa, it’s safe,” said Enyll confidently “why would dad lie to us, he’s been so nice over the past couple of days”

“Ok, fine” Asa said

Enyll and Asa walked to the golden mist Enyll reached out to touch it. Upon Enyll’s hand touch the mist it did not solidify the same way it had for Fenron but began to part revealing more light. Asa walked closer and grabbed Enyll’s other hand and reached out too. They look at each other and step further in. After about 3 meters in they reach the other side and see the ruins of a strange town overgrown with much the same architecture of the structures on the other side of the gate’s veil. They try to turn back but they find the mist now turns solid as it did for their father, except they were on the wrong side.

“Dad!” Enyll cried out as he banged on the veil now becoming as hard as a rock

“Enyll, Asa are you alright” could be heard coming through the veil although it was a bit muffled

“Dad, help we’re stuck, we can’t get back”

“I’ll find another way though just wait there”

“Dad!, wait”

Chapter 10

Enyll and Asa became trapped on the wrong side of the veil they tried to stay near the veil they looked for another way around, but found none they had a little food in the small packs they had on them but not enough to last long. Soon they told their dad through their muffled communication through the veil that they were going to look for food on this side, and made an exit.

After days of searching, they find some food but no way of getting back. After almost two weeks of this Enyll and Asa see no way of getting back and decide to go deeper in hopes that they will find a way back. Before they leave they go to talk to their father one last time.

“Dad, please, can you go to the surface and tell Tylka sorry for leaving,” said Enyll

“Dad,” Asa said, with tears in her eyes “I am glad we got to know each other, I love you.”

"I wish we could have spent more time together, goodbye, I love you, both of you"

Enyll and Asa Departed. They left the gate in hopes of finding a way back home they wandered through the strange abandoned village, it took two days to cross to the other side, the large passageway that they had entered weeks before with their dad appeared to only be an entrance to the massive space that lay beyond the gate after they exited the village they walked for days until they reached a large cliff ahead.

"What's that, a cliff?" Enyll questioned

"Looks like it" replied Asa

As they came to the edge of the cliff they looked down upon a city ten times larger than any city they had seen before. But it was not a dead lifeless abandoned city as they had seen down here before, it was full of life people walked on its streets far below them"

"What is it?" Enyll wondered aloud

"Our future." Asa stated

The End