

PANDEAE III

eternity has no Hands

Narration and report by

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PROLOG

On an island in the Atlantic, something existed that was created before the apocalypse and was supposed to allow high technology to survive.

It survived without the humans, even though it was made for them.

After it had a thousand years to find a way, it began to pursue its own goals.

In memory of humanity, her creator, she built a temple with special human clones.

Part III

Infinity has no limits.

*This novel is the sequel to "2045++"; www.nanina-roman.de
Proofreading is still pending.*

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1 The Elf

What a rotten parallel world!, I kept repeating in my mind, from the moment I had first seen a human being bending over me. A human being! - something must have gone wrong.

It took me a long time to realize that I was not in a house of healing, surrounded by lovely scents and delicate healing music, more floating than lying down.

Instead, I lay heavily in a bed, barely able to move a limb and permanently nauseous. A person looked at me briefly and I could guess that my surgery had not been easy. Those were my first thoughts in this world.

In the meantime a thousand years have passed and I write this report in the language of the people of this world because I hope and am almost convinced that humans, at least a part of them, have managed to reach a new stage of evolution. It is to become a time capsule that may one day be found by posthuman beings. A thousand years is not a very long time for me, but it is for the people here on Earth. This constant struggle, with all the lower and also higher beings on this planet, has made me very tired, dead tired. I have now realized that all attempts to ever tunnel out of this parallel world are doomed to failure. There is no known way in Earth science to get into a parallel world.

This world here does not allow for energy extraction in a microlocalized probability field without immediately returning the borrowed energy. Magic and tunneling into parallel worlds are not possible with it, at least with my acquired knowledge.

It was probably a higher order, a harmonic, that brought me to this parallel world. Externally, there are hardly any differences. Mountains, forests, rivers and seas are indeed confusingly similar. Larger differences appear only with the other living beings, but more about that later in the report.

My arrival occurred at a white circular square with a red cross on it. This was the end point of my tunnel duct. I lay almost unconscious on this circle, which was on the roof of a stone house.

Unable to move, I was still lying there when this loud flying object flew away above me again.

I looked at this place later and still wonder what strange affinity there must have been that this was the end of my transfer.

I was discovered and then immediately picked up by a rolling bed. In the meantime my consciousness already began to flicker and I only got fragments. I was condemned to passivity and could no longer actively intervene in what was happening.

When needles were inserted into the arteries of my hands and connected with tubes, my passive consciousness was also gone.

Obviously they thought I was seriously injured in a car pile-up. What a word: "Car pile-up"! The sound is more reminiscent of a dance. A similarity can not be denied.

I was able to perceive sound images and thought patterns after my first awakening from anesthesia. I was immediately able to imitate these sounds. If higher life evolved, no matter what universe, it had to be somehow very similar at this level. That had been the philosophy of my world and seemed to be confirmed here. Interpreting the thought structures was already more difficult.

My head was pounding and a few times I fell back into unconsciousness. When my condition stabilized, I registered that I was slowly becoming a problem for the hospital for a variety of reasons. I could only decipher and make use of a few sound images, such as "yes" and "no", at the beginning.

The real problem at first was my name, date of birth, relatives and insurance. The hospital had to register me somehow, already because of the reimbursement, as I learned later and could not understand for a long time what that had to do with the healing. The labeling of the blood samples needed identification, which I could not give them. It is still a mystery to me today that they were able to determine anything at all.

Temporarily I could still pass as a foreigner of unknown origin. This helped me enormously, because now a student nurse was trying to teach me a few words. Slowly, I actually began to speak brokenly like a foreigner. However, I had the advantage that by linking sound images and thought patterns, it was easy for me to pick up a foreign language very quickly anyway.

I had finally settled on the meaningless syllables Selon, which I picked up somewhere, as my name. There was another problem with the age, though. My actual age at that time was 162 planetary revolutions, which is about 210 Earth revolutions.

How did this accident happen?

Because I was so young, I also tunneled to Terra with a group my age. I call this primordial planet, which is still at an early stage of evolution, Terra, in contrast to the similar Earth.

My home planet, on the other hand, is a very old, harmonious world, with a slightly higher gravity than on Terra or Earth. My stronger bone structure had driven the surgeon almost to despair, as I later learned. My hip joint, shattered in the fall from a greater height, had to be repaired with wires and pins. However, in just one year I had reorganized my body as if I had never had that iron in me.

We also have more powerful muscles, which encourages us to do some athletic activities on Terra. There, I had the misfortune of crashing during a flight with one of the great eagles. That was the starting point of my unfortunate tunneling into that remote area of the universe.

At first, the diet of the people caused me difficulties: Meat, grains, vegetables and fruits, gave me trouble. Even on our adventure trip on Terra, we fed on a complex probability matrix in the form of round cookies. This synthesizes a high-energy, balanced diet from vacuum energy.

At least I was able to manipulate the probability field of this universe in such a way that I could not only read people's mind images, but also influence them in their thoughts without them personally noticing. I kept this a top secret at first.

I was transferred to a military hospital. There I had to undergo a series of tests. Hair, skin and other tissue samples were taken.

My situation in this military hospital became more and more critical. Apparently, the opinion was slowly gaining ground that I was most likely an alien, a kind of alien, and therefore extremely dangerous. I could feel that clearly and in addition the isolation and guarding

intensified from day to day. The only pleasant thing for me was that my injuries had time to heal well.

My stay in the military hospital must have preoccupied a great many people, I later learned, in intelligence agencies, national security committees, and counterterrorism forces. They were not sure whether I had to be classified as an enemy of the world or a friend of the world. They were afraid that I might cause a devastating pandemic with killer bacteria and viruses.

National defense committees were preparing to repel an invasion from outer space, because if an alien, and disguised as a human to boot, showed up, there must be a whole armada of spaceships near Earth, with only one goal, to conquer Earth.

Although everything was top secret, some information leaked out and wild speculation began. Conspiracy theories and religious apocalyptic visions were booming.

I had to disappear if I didn't want to risk my life or sacrifice it to human science. I just felt too young for that. From the thought images I could read that liquidation was definitely already hovering over me as a mental cloud.

The interrogations alternated between how I had come to Earth, which I didn't know myself, and how much more of my kind was to come, which I couldn't answer either.

In the meantime I had noticed that I was constantly observed by several cameras and every noise was recorded. I carried many electrodes and a transmitter around my body all the time.

But I was given books, even those in the style of picture encyclopedias, which enabled me to learn the language quickly.

In my current state, however, I had a completely different problem. How could I escape from this maximum security prison?

I was left with only a faint hope. With two of my interrogators and one female interrogator I had noticed that they produced such thought-images which had something to do with my shapely body. Well, I really was still very youthful at just over 200 Earth years old. Our growth only slows down more and more, without really stopping and then ending in a decay of the body like here the people on earth.

It was not difficult for me to strengthen all three of them in their desire to the point that they would find it regrettable should I be sacrificed to science and the safety of Earth from aliens.

I had no chance against the entire surveillance system. Influencing the surveillance cameras failed, although I had mentally penetrated to the image matrix. However, this was much too coarse for me to be able to suggest anything by changing the probability field. An attempt to elude the eyes of one of the guards also failed, as the cameras continued to transmit incorruptible images of me. The statements about not being able to see me in the room, while at the same time the cameras were transmitting images, only confirmed my dangerousness to humanity. I had done myself no service by doing so.

I don't know what I was originally to the female who took a liking to me, a love object for partnership or just a protective, helpless, child-like being.

My last ride began and she was there. As I could learn from the thought patterns of those accompanying me, I was to be shock-frozen for the sake of general safety and so that I could still be available to science. This prospect strengthened my will to survive enormously. In my armoured transfer car I was accompanied by an escort of armed motorcyclists. I managed to get one of the motorcyclists in the rear to overtake us and join us in the lead, which confused those riding there enormously. Another one, whom I could see through my little window at the back, I got to pull out to the left and push the other rider off onto the pavement.

The two companions next to me, who had bound themselves to me with iron rings, I had already been able to put into a restful and relaxed sleep.

Both the front and the back were now so chaotic that there were crashes of the bikes. This was the last option for me, I mentally contacted my sympathizer next to the driver. She took charge of the vehicle by taking out the driver. Exactly how she did this eluded me.

Everything then happened very quickly. The armored vehicle sped along with me for a few streets, almost rolling over in the curves. Then suddenly it stopped. My girlfriend unlocked the back door, locked me away from my sleeping guards, and we ran. Where to, I didn't know, I just trusted her. Some of the companions on their motorcycles, now back in the saddle, I was able to fake some obstacles in time to throw them off again before they could shoot.

We had reached a busy pedestrian zone of the city but a helicopter was already circling above us and alarm sirens of police cars sounded nearby. The situation seemed hopeless. Passers-by looked to the sky in fright, then my companion, who was now already becoming, at least in my eyes, my friend, shouted very loudly: "A bomb, an attack!" Whereupon people tried to flee to all sides. Her name was Maria, she had already rolled up her uniform jacket and in it the pistol into a bundle and stowed it in a plastic bag.

We joined a group of South American street musicians who were hurriedly hauling their instruments and amplification equipment to a minibus parked in a side street not quite up to code.

After Maria told the musicians a story about a terrorist attack and introduced us as two visitors of a textile department of a department store who had stormed off head over heels, the minibus started to leave the city. In the meantime they were looking for some clothes for me, as I had made my escape in only a pair of two-piece pyjamas of some sort. I didn't look very South American in them, but I could help that a little with a critical observer.

Overcoming the roadblocks was not difficult because I could always make the Homeland Security officers checking at gunpoint feel good that we were harmless buskers. There were never more than three of us doing crowd control at the same time and I was up to it.

Finally we had left the tumultuous city and drove on a country road, we wanted to avoid highways, at Maria's insistent request, to a still unknown destination. Unknown insofar as the crew could not agree. The only thing they agreed on was that this terrorist scare was now due for a break with an extensive picnic.

The bus turned onto a dirt road. In the midst of fields, like an island, lay a lonely farmstead. There we drove and had still special luck, because there was a farmer's shop for the direct marketing of their agricultural products. Rough wooden tables and benches were built under a tree, for the direct supply of the purchased products.

"You're a terrorist!" one of the musicians points at Maria and me.

"Yes," Maria replied and laughed, making the musicians laugh as well, at least I was able to convey that well.

The farmer's wife, suspicious because of the terror warning on the news, I could also calm down, so that it became a cheerful and by the alcoholic fruit brandies also exhilarating stop.

In the best mood, the musicians had started to play and dance, I put my hands around Maria's neck and pulled her to me to give her a kiss of gratitude, which however almost made her lose her composure. After she regained her composure, she pulled me aside. "We need to do something right away, sooner or later, more like sooner, they will have found us. Selon, our lead is slim." She paused, helicopters could be heard in the distance, and I could tell her brain was already searching for wording for an ultimatum. What an ultimatum was I didn't know at the time but it was probably the only way to get away.

Maria knew what such a thing should look like. She had the farmer's wife give her a piece of paper and a pen, formulated an ultimatum with conditions and, if they were not met, with threats that would result in the near extinction of the entire human race, they would be put into action. The farmer's wife, after I had suggested something, also immediately began to telephone.

Maria said that would work, but would not entirely protect us from undercover investigation and other stalking. Another important passage in the ultimatum was that it assumed a breach of trust and relieved me of the obligation to make contact with official bodies, be they scientific or political.

Maria was very nervous about this game of hasard for the next while, until we slowly became certain we would be left alone with a proper distance.

After our, at least for the musicians, happy afternoon on the farm, we drove on with them while the farmer's wife set the ultimatum by post hypnosis and telephone. In the rearview mirror we even saw two helicopters touch down not far from our picnic spot. Now they could convince themselves in black and white that the ultimatum was correct.

"Crap" Maria suddenly said, "I totally forgot to ask for a sufficient amount of money, I don't have much cash with me and I can forget about my credit card.

What money was approximately, I knew at that time already. You could value almost everything with a number and if you had a correspondingly high sum of this money, you could exchange this money for goods at designated places.

"I guess we'll have to rob a bank, because we won't get far without enough money."

"What's mugging?", I only knew that word in its second part as "falling" and that wasn't allowed to happen to me in the early days after my surgery.

"What if we borrow money?", I asked Maria.

"I'll lend you the 3 euros for the time being," Nurse Rita had said to me while I was still in hospital, when she noticed that I didn't like drinking the coffee on the ward and she then fetched me a cappuccino from the cafeteria.

"Borrow money and then not pay it back?", Maria laughed, "only the government can do that with impunity."

We were still accompanied by helicopters in appropriate distance up to the next city but that were also already all actions, at least for the next time.

Maria dressed me in a fashion boutique and then we sat, me for the first time, in a sidewalk coffee shop. I knew immediately that I was yet to learn to love all these interesting drinks and pastries. Slowly, with this growing enjoyment of earthly food, the memory of the nearly tasteless cookies of my home planet faded.

Maria was nervous all the time and kept looking around. I tried to distract her with a kiss, which only succeeded for a short time.

"Oh, you look like my younger brother - keep your sunglasses on, please!"

"Why, should I see everything darker?"

"So people don't stare at you like that, Selon. The optician noticed earlier that you have larger and slightly different eyes."

Now Maria pulled me to her and kissed me until I was almost out of breath.

After that, I decided to hold off on interpreting Mary's thought patterns, at least most of the time.

An interesting parallel world I now repeated almost stereotypically in my mind, *you drive a few miles and you're back in a community with lots of people.*

At that time I did not yet understand that this dense settlement was a consequence of the enormous energy reserves. Maria later said quite dryly to my still almost childlike amazement and admiration of the earth's civilization: "The peak has already been passed and now we have to draw more and more energy from wind, water, sun and geothermal energy. Oh yes, and then we have nuclear power, which is something like your vacuum energy, but we can't handle it properly, as some people claim.

At the moment we had the problem of providing ourselves with enough energy in the form of money for our immersion.

Maria came up with one bank robbery scenario after another. All of them somehow started with Maria getting her gun out of the plastic bag, taking scourgings or blackmailing the teller of a bank, while I was already indulging in the second big ice cream sundae with fruits and cream.

Then I saw from the letters "DEUTSCHE BANK" above a stately building that it must be such an institution that Maria wanted to rob. I could perceive that her thoughts pulsed only in that direction.

I felt a little nauseous and had an urgent need to go to a restroom. Maria understood immediately and commented, "That would have made me sick, too."

I actually didn't feel that comfortable.

The ventilation window of the toilet was very small and in retrospect I must say this was the biggest problem. Finally I was outside and in a backyard, from which I came back to the square with the many street cafes. Unnoticed by Maria, I went into the Deutsche Bank, looked around and discovered a man behind an iron grille who had stacked banknotes in many compartments.

I asked this bank cashier in my way for a larger sum, which he packed me also still friendly in an in-house bag. When I arrived back at Maria, who had become quite nervous in the meantime, and she noticed what I had in the bag, she immediately jumped up and looked for a taxi stand.

"Munich Airport," she called our next destination, "we're late, the car broke down."

"I'll see what I can do." He called his dispatch and after a few short back and forths we drove right off with him. The turns to the highway were enough that I spent the rest of the drive, which was over 6 hours, squatting pale and apathetic in the back seat, only able to take in the scenery in bits and pieces.

At the airport, Maria paid for the taxi ride and we hurried into the departure lounge, only to come right back out and take the next train into the center.

By now it had gotten dark and I saw the lights of an evening city for the first time. I was thrilled.

Maria stormed with me into a large consumer temple, studied the departments of the individual floors and then left me already sitting again in one of the in-house cafes. This time I drank only a simple mineral water, on which a piece of lemon floated.

Shortly before the closing of this temple she returned with two knapsacks on a cart, in one of which were many articles of clothing, and in the other pots, a tent, and other articles of equipment, the practical use of which did not become apparent to me until much later.

She put these future travel companions on the floor next to me and literally fell onto the chair, then she grabbed my neck and pulled my head towards her to whisper in my ear that she had counted the money on the toilet and that it was over 50000 thousand euros. That would be enough for now, she told me, before giving me another long kiss. I realized immediately, that was real passion and joy and I felt a little shabby, because I had initially threaded all this only to save my skin.

That night we slept on uncomfortable benches in Munich's main train station.

Maria couldn't find any real peace, even when it was my turn to guard our luggage. The most diverse variations of travel routes and destinations were flying through her head, so that I feared she would end up getting lost in the chaos of her thoughts. Although Maria kept looking around cautiously, she couldn't make out any pursuers. I too had an unmistakable feeling of being watched.

The next day we began with the morning personal hygiene on the toilet and a subsequent breakfast in one of the station restaurants. Despite this, for her unsatisfactory night, Maria beamed at me. I beamed back but no longer out of calculation, this now expressed my increased trust in her and I even watched the desire rise in me to hug and kiss Maria.

She seemed to notice and stopped me by saying, "We have to go, we have something to get for our trip."

"Where do you want to go?", I relied on her like a child and that was probably the best I could do at the moment.

Newly dressed, with the backpack on our backs, we walked through the big city, buying food and other items here and there, the use of which I also did not know yet.

In one shop we left a lot of money, Maria bought round gold coins. She said that was still the best money. We also loved gold, but we loved silver even more for our jewellery. At my request she also bought some coins. The backpack became heavier and heavier.

Then we went back to the station and Maria bought tickets that would take us to the border of the Union and NATO.

According to their impression, we had also succeeded in shaking off the pursuers in Munich, so that we could approach the eastern border as tourists unobserved. We hitchhiked to the border

and looked for accommodation in a small village. I no longer understood anything of the language and was entirely dependent on the thought patterns that I could perceive.

The room was up a flight of stairs above the Dorfschenke, as the room filled with beer-drinking men was called. We ate scrambled eggs with ham and dumplings, drank not beer but a glass of wine spritzer, and then went up to our dormitory.

No sooner had we placed the backpacks in a corner than Maria approached me and began to kiss me passionately. Although I had expected it joyfully, I was still unsettled, among us I had never experienced such a stormy possession. Somehow it happens much more ritually with us and usually starts by beautiful verses and music so not necessarily something for teenagers like I still was. Besides, I lacked real experiences and apart from caressing and tender kisses I had not yet acted out any further needs. Why should I, I had left for Terra with like-minded people to have adventures in the still wild nature there, not necessarily to become a master of amorous adventures and the art of love. There was actually time for that later, when the time for wild adventures was over and the perfecting began. But that could take time and rarely began before the 500th year of life.

I couldn't help but notice something very wild and impetuous in Maria's thought patterns and was able to adjust to it. I felt like one of the two tigers in this love game, always fighting to see which one would get the upper hand.

Exhausted and happy, we both fell asleep immediately after the climax. I will not erase the images of that first night of love from my brain. Even after more than 1000 years, at this moment, as I am writing this report, I see this room in front of me as if it was only yesterday.

While I slept on, Maria organized our onward journey downstairs in the guest room. It had not yet begun to dawn when she woke me and we hurriedly stowed our luggage in our backpacks. We followed a bearded man through the forest over a meadow and a field and finally through a small ravine in a riverbed.

Then, the sun already shining over the treetops, we had made it. In front of us lay the great territory of "Bear and Dragon", the "Russian-Chinese Federation", in which we wanted to submerge ourselves for the time being.

For me, despite all the hardships and adversities, it was the most beautiful journey of my life so far. We loved each other and always found opportunities to enjoy our love physically. With my help we had also obtained travel documents and I first learned the Russian language and later in East Siberia also Chinese. We exchanged the Euro bit by bit into the national currency, and when we had only a small remainder, we learned that the Euro had broken apart and the entire countries bordering the North Atlantic fell into a deep currency crisis.

We chose a route along the southern edge of this giant empire. Maria was afraid of the Siberian winter.

We reached Siberia with the onset of winter. It got so cold within a few days that I thought I would be shock-frozen here after all. To cover our tracks, we tried to flag down cars that could give us a lift. We still shunned public transportation. Maria believed we were being followed. She obviously knew the methods and means of the secret services to eliminate unpopular people.

It was mostly trucks loaded with lumber that would see Maria, stop, and then reluctantly take me along as a payload. Maria taught me how to protect her from the intrusiveness of the drivers. Which then usually led to my being thrown out at the first best opportunity.

Maria's behavior remained a mystery to me for a long time. She loved me - but why? She was in her early 30s, had neither an intimate boyfriend nor a girlfriend. Two older women, in the rank above her, tried to bind her to them by spending free time together and drinking. Was Maria running from them? Then why with me, an alien?

Then, in my later studies of the art of this planet, I discovered the close connection between the patterns of human harmony and ours. I prefer to refer to us as elves rather than aliens. The term alien has so many negative associations on Earth that simply do not apply to our life form.

My later studies brought me the realization: There must be a universal law of harmony and beauty that applies to all higher forms of life in the entire universe. In the Fibonacci number

series and the golden section there was an algorithm which seemed to me suitable for describing this harmony. This goal took civilizations to a higher level. But what happened when it was nearly achieved? Did the decadent descent begin? We Elves had come closer to this ideal, we had had much more time and we had not had an industrial revolution for lack of fossil fuels. At that time, however, I had no idea of the universe of pure mathematics.

We reached Lake Baikal, a smooth ice surface. Near the shore was a settlement with a small frozen harbor. We sought out a restaurant or something similar. In it I could make out two groups of men. One of them had come from ice fishing on the lake, the other wanted to leave for the taiga the next day with their hunting rifles.

Suddenly I noticed a tension in the guest room, which was directed at me and Maria. That we were being watched was nothing special, I had gotten used to it. It was something else, something unknown. A vodka glass flew in the direction of one of the men in the fishing party. Almost at the same instant, a metallic "click" sounded. The projectile slammed into the wooden wall beside me. I had sensed the danger in a split second and reacted. This is a special ability of our species, which had contributed not insignificantly to our evolution from the animal kingdom. A second shot was not fired. One of the hunters had drawn a large caliber pistol and pointed it at the man. He rumbled in Russian, then I saw a fireball connected with a tremendous bang. The bullet smashed into the ceiling above the fisherman. There was a commotion, during which our pursuers, I could make out two, managed to escape.

"Come along - quickly," the hunter who had fired the shot and obviously thrown the glass pulled me up by the collar. Had he said that or had I just decoded his thoughts that way? From Maria I could mentally receive that we had no choice.

Two other hunters with their rifles at the ready accompanied us outside to a large off-road vehicle. Immediately we began a breakneck drive through a deeply snow-covered forest landscape with slippery paths and dangerous switchbacks. Several times I saw us tumble down the slope. One of the hunters tried to explain to us in bumpy English what had happened.

Their boss, who was something of a local oligarch here, had overheard that two agents were waiting for the arrival of two refugees from the Western European Union. That kind of thing was always interesting.

We arrived at a hunting lodge with considerable comfort inside. An elderly couple, who were obviously the caretakers, were waiting for us. A fireplace blazed in a room lined with various furs.

I was lucky enough to sit with my back to the fire. A pleasant warmth flowed through my body, which, I increasingly felt, had been approaching a state that could well be described as "frozen" over the past few weeks. I was not used to such extreme cold.

"Who are you to want to kill you?" the bear-like boss asked in a rumbling voice, his name was Igor.

Maria tried to explain something, avoiding my true origins, which were not entirely clear to her either. She passed me off as a genetic experiment that was to be frozen for further scientific study, because they weren't quite sure how dangerous it could become to humanity. In any case, she said, they wanted to end this experiment with elimination if they couldn't get it alive.

Silence.

Igor seemed to have doubts about this explanation, or so I perceived his thought-images.

"That your companion is not a normal human being is probably obvious to everyone here," Igor remarked disparagingly. Then the oligarch's voice, now not so loud, rose again: "Your Selon looks like a teenager from Mars!

Everyone in the room laughed.

"How dangerous is he really? Didn't you lie to us a little? There are rumors about aliens that have landed in Western Europe and that ... anyway, our intelligence service, and not only our intelligence service, is very interested in such specimens.

Things were getting complicated for Maria. How were we going to get out of this? Should I begin with suggestions that could distract her? But where were we to escape to? We were at the mercy of that bearish Russian.

The vodka glasses were filled again: "Nastrowje". I could not drink anything, a single sip would have been enough to signal to me incompatibility, I would even say toxicity. I could not afford this loss of control in our situation.

"And what do you say?" asked Igor, turning to Maria, "why did you run away with him?" Maria became embarrassed. "Well, it doesn't matter. The question is, what am I going to do with you?"

The glasses were filled again. I noticed how Maria was looking for a way out, constantly assessing the chances of escape.

I put my hand on the back of her neck and asked her to tell what it was about me. Did we have any other choice? We could still consider an escape.

Maria's report had made Igor thoughtful. Then he suddenly stood up: "We have to leave here, right away. Soon our secret service or someone else will be here. Hurry! We don't have much time."

I was very young then, too young and inexperienced on Earth to foresee what would continue to happen. Deciphering Igor's thoughts was not difficult for me. Later, when I analyzed it more closely, I could already see that Igor regarded Maria as a kind of trophy to be hunted down. Maria's story of my landing on Earth didn't quite ring true with Igor. For Igor I was an aberration of Maria and he would show her what a real man was. That's how I interpreted his mental images.

That same night, a small helicopter landed to take us to a larger airport. There we boarded a private jet that took us to the sea in the south. At the coast we had to jump with parachutes.

A yacht was anchored in a bay. We could not make out pursuers, at least in the first 24 hours. That we would be found here soon, was probably clear to Maria as well as Igor.

While I tried to learn as much as I could from this world, I still felt like a child. I can say that from my perspective today.

Igor had a wife and children in Russia, but that in no way prevented him from casting a sexual spell over Maria. For both of them I became more and more an unwanted object, because I did not belong to the inner space of humanity, I was an object from outside.

For Igor, I had become a subject for whom he had to find a fence. I was a "hot commodity" that had to be gotten rid of at high risk but also at high profit. Igor managed to get Maria on his side.

I was left with only one advantage, I could guess her thought-images better and better, though I could not match all the terms. What are 210 years of age in a strange world, to people who age so quickly. To them I was a teenager, nothing more.

Within a day it was clear to Igor that he was not going to find a buyer for me anytime soon, although he tried incessantly through all his connections. The yacht wasn't so big that I couldn't follow all of Igor's train of thought. Slowly it became a certainty that I would be unsellable. The alien object was becoming worthless, and worse, it was becoming a danger.

We were steering an aimless course in an island landscape. Then our yacht was located.

I picked up Igor's secret numerical code and passwords and was able to remember them well. Nothing in the mental realm of Igor, Maria, and the rest of the crew was closed to me. I was like a child who had to take in the thoughts of the adults and make up the connections myself.

I wondered what I felt for Maria and what she could possibly feel for me. I noticed with regret how she was falling more and more under the spell of Igor and how old archaic patterns of evolution were awakened. She was the woman who had to get the strongest genes in the human herd. I was no more than an exotic romance to her.

What does Mary mean to me now, a thousand years later? I didn't know for sure then. Was she a continuation of my youthful adventures on Terra? I answer that question with <yes> today,

and I still wonder about that strange feeling then. Now I describe it as "melancholy," a vague sadness, a foreboding of what lay ahead for me.

I was a "hot object" and as such I had to disappear. In the distance, I saw the lights of a port city that we were heading towards. What a city was, I knew very well by this time.

I left the yacht unnoticed around midnight in a rubber boat with an outboard motor. I had been able to distract the guard by suggesting that they had a fire in the engine room.

Although I had observed exactly how such a boat worked, I did not manage to start the engine at that time. The yacht had become smaller in the meantime. I could just make out a stern light. Then I saw another fireball. Later I found out that it was meant for me. A drone had wiped out the yacht and caused joy in the president in charge. To the intelligence agencies of the world, I was history.

I finally managed to start the engine with Igor's personal code. Without much difficulty I reached the beach not far from the port of this town. With great difficulty I managed to sink the dinghy. Near the beach I slept in a group of bushes until morning.

What I didn't know was that the remains of the yacht and the killed occupants were identified and then the search for me was resumed. But that only took place days later.

I was on the run again and I knew only one thing for sure: I was not allowed to attract attention with my special abilities. From Maria I still had two gold coins in a small pocket of my pants. I exchanged one of them in the city for money in the local currency.

Although I saw the people in this part of the earth, somewhat more similar than the people in Central Europe, it was very difficult to assign me to a race. This strengthened me in my later analyses that there must be something like an absolute measure of beauty in the entire cosmos and that evolution always took, indeed had to take, this path for higher civilizations. It seemed that there was also an algorithm for beauty and harmony for higher beings.

I hid in this big port city until I noticed that the excitement was getting bigger and bigger. They were looking for a top terrorist and justified controls, house searches and curfews. I assumed I was wanted, and I was right. This time was enough for me to get information on the Internet. While officially a super terrorist was wanted, some non-official info platforms knew that in reality the hunt was for an alien who was not killed with the elimination of the yacht.

"They do exist, the aliens. We are not alone in space" This excitement spread across the Internet and caused perplexity among some and excessive euphoria among others. Global philosophy was coming apart at the seams, for this was obviously neither a false flag action by the rulers of this world, nor an invented conspiracy theory. But I didn't care much, I was fully occupied with my survival.

The coercive measures against society led to riots. Young people, mostly male and without jobs, fought the police in street battles. I had to hide and change places all the time. How could I cover my tracks? If I found some peace in some corner, I tried to read books and explore the area via the internet to find a better hiding place.

The situation in the city became more and more difficult and I also had to flee from here, but to where? The unrest was getting bigger and bigger and I could therefore count on less attention.

The revolts spread globally. States and alliances became more unstable. Later I was able to analyze the Apocalyptic Horsemen, who appeared as harbingers of a Dark Age. Possibly I was a good cause to accelerate the process, I was certainly not to blame.

Out of diplomatic entanglements, and combined with the inevitable mistakes that arose unilaterally from a technical evolution and lack of evolution of the species, the downfall was initiated. Every advanced civilization so far in human history had created its own gravedigger. This time it was a global downfall.

The instabilities later became greater and greater, the global system of civilization got out of control. In 2045, the first atomic bombs fell, all these high-tech weapons systems developed up to that time were used.

At that time I was much too busy with myself to follow the escalation. I could not yet analyze the conditions that had led to this final end of the global high civilization.

If I now write more than 1000 years later about the conditions of that time, a lot of what happened in the following time already flows into it.

I had been too young for Mary's love, I can say that with certainty today. I was still at an age when the world was an emotional object and much more interesting than sex, which belonged to a later stage of development, shaped primarily by the compulsion to pass on genes.

I still had time, could cover my tracks and hide in a safe place. I was still living in the year 2040, when I began to deal more intensively with the language of the people. I didn't have a native language, that was a disadvantage, but at the same time an advantage. So I could analyse the thought-patterns as the essence of all languages and needed only to memorize the single concrete expressions by some intuitively grasped rules. I succeeded better and better in picking up people's thought patterns and also in manipulating them.

They seemed to have officially forgotten about me, I could use my special skills again. Money was no object, and I could fake any identity I wanted. I didn't even have to change locations anymore. Humanity was busy with its demise.

In the beginning I tried to learn everything I could reach, until I realized that by doing so I would give my brain a chaotic state. What was fascinating to me was what was called mathematics here on Earth. Of course we could count. But what was understood by counting on Earth thrilled me. Counting became faster and faster. The first stage was called multiplying, then it became even faster and was called exponentiating. With incredible speed everything was counted and given numbers. Mathematics pulled me like a whirlpool into a black hole. But then physics came along and pulled me out of it. I realized that on my planet we were mapping nature as if in a learning matrix. We couldn't come up with abstract algorithms that we could then feed into a computer. But we could also understand these laws. Both the algorithms here on Earth and our biologically based learning matrix were only approximations of a reality that even we didn't know was just an illusion, a vast simulation.

While I was still thinking about this difference between the two civilizations, the situation became more and more critical. I managed to reach an island in the Atlantic Ocean before the first hostilities began. On this island, far from the continents, I spent most of this world inferno, which lasted more than ten years.

I studied the human sciences as far as I could still reach them in print. The Internet had already collapsed at the beginning of the inferno.

More and more horror news arrived around me. I was constantly struggling with fever attacks, my body's own regenerative capacity had to renew tissue much more often due to radioactive radiation than in a normal environment. People coped much less, they died faster and healthy children were hardly ever born.

The Technical Evolution had lasted a little over 200 years, only to meet its demise in 10. In the end, everyone was fighting everyone else. The world's environment was contaminated. The survivors had hardly any children left. Weakened humans were nearly wiped out by faster mutating viruses and bacteria. The complex web of news and commodity flows no longer existed. Warlords ruled some territories with cruel violence at first, until that too was over.

I had learned a great deal about human evolution and found that humanity had failed at a crucial turning point in its history. The building blocks of life were known, new creatures could be designed beyond natural evolution. It could have been a revolution in evolution. Yet, in the final stages of the third world war, all that was capable of destroying the species occurred.

2 The Lord of the Earth



Time ran as through an hourglass, only the upper and lower glass were missing, the sand came from infinity and returned to it in the lower part.

Nanino was busy arranging and taking possession of Pandae's legacies. He traveled to all the sites and local units on the continent of America. At first he took drones, then later he traveled only digitally. Nanino loved his mostly human body, but his memory matrix reached its capacity limit and he outsourced parts of it to clouds of the simulation units.

He organized all the outposts in the planetary system. Even on the asteroid Ceres Pandae had established a base, but the interstellar connections ran through minor planets of the Kuiper belt.

He always kept in touch with Pandae. Beo, Alan and also the other children of Pandae moved in space units from the solar system in different directions of the universe. If you wanted to locate them with the astronomical observation instruments of humans, you would only be able to observe them as ellipsoidal, large chunks of rock. A world of nanobots and simulation units slept within them, ready to establish centers and relay stations in distant solar systems. No electromagnetic waves connected these space units; they were linked by harmonics of the interstellar gravitational field and thus invisible to all civilizations at the human stage of their development.

On Earth, Nanino created a network of artificial insects and animals. In old ruined castles isolated on mountains, once preserved as monuments but now very much deteriorated, he set up relay stations and nanobot units in the rock below that looked after all his spies and recreated them if necessary.

Nanino knew the people so well that he decided to keep the continent of America free of them. North and South America were to develop undisturbed as a biotope and guarantee stability on an earth that was now beginning a new evolution without fossil fuels. The trees were to be allowed to spread again in unrestrained competition in impenetrable forests and the fauna with its constant eating and being eaten would let all the remnants of a past humane culture sink into the sea of time. By the end of this planet's astronomical lifetime, this continent would experience all the stages of a demise.

But should he create new clones for the rest of Earth and send them into the human world to gain new experiences or to unhinge another world?

Pandae had done so, and had come to the conclusion that a posthuman civilization no longer had any interest in a human civilization. Why should he ignore that, weren't they his experiences as well? Yes, he belonged to the Pandae family, he too was Pandae.

Fear, greed and laziness were the driving forces that had created a humane civilization on Earth. But could there still be a higher development?

Pandae had tried, had she failed, did she have to fail? The elimination of aggression in the human genetic structure certainly produced a more humane society, but it was inferior to the archaic genetic structures still present and spreading again.

The scouts brought Nanino news that the Bay was pinned down on a small mountain fortress and that the followers of the religion of Archaos had crossed the dividing mountain range to the Empire of Women. The Bay and other small princes had been defeated by a more powerful prince who had created a great empire of Archaos almost throughout the Iberian Peninsula. Only in the north were there still some territories that had not yet been annexed to the empire.

The Bay's secret! Nanino remembered their capture and the debauched sex orgy to which he and Beo had been condemned. By now he also knew his secret, which was really an experiment by Pandae.

Nanino took precautions that he couldn't be killed easily. His battle insects would prevent that at the last moment. He decided to seek him out unnoticed by the castle crew. While planning, he realized that it was impossible without eliminating the guards.

The experiment was obviously over and the Bay's experience needed to be secured. Nanino took this type of drone that Pandae had used several times before. Beo had been dropped off in front of the Heavenly Child Sect's cave back then. The insects were given the schedule for the guards and the Bay to sleep. Then on a night without moonlight, the drone came and picked him up. Ropes were placed so that a possible escape was feigned.

The Bay was still suspected of being connected to supernatural forces since Nanino and Beo's visit. An almost impossible escape could only be made with the help of these powers. When the supposed escape was discovered, the guards still had to face their punishment. The night guard was pushed from the tower into the depths.

The drone brought the Bay into the settlement of Beo and Alan's clones. Only two Servorobots kept order in the bungalows. Nanino had still maintained them and had taken up residence in Beo and Alan's house. From there he went every morning to the Temple of Apollo, in the underground of which was the headquarters. He was still a human being and intended to remain so until one day he would tire of this biological body.

Nanino was standing next to the Bay when he woke up. "Where am I?" were his first words.

"In Atlantis, or what's left of Atlantis, you are on the islands of the blissful."

The Bay couldn't believe his eyes. "Am I dead now?"

"You can't call it that, though you may well have died in that one life."

Bay's eyes slowly cleared and he now truly believed he had arrived in heaven. Wasn't that one of the angels that had appeared in his hunting palace.

"Yes, you guess right, I'm Nanino and I was a special prisoner in your escape castle with Beo. You're not the Bay anymore either, so I'll address you as 'you' from now on."

The Bay had sat up on his cot, still not believing his eyes. He looked down at himself and immediately noticed the shabby smock of his captivity. Slowly he regained his old confidence. "How did I get here? What happened?"

"You escaped from your captive castle and did so with the help of your angels. So at least thy judges believe, and soon many more in thy former land, which is now no longer thy land, and which has been incorporated into the Great Bay."

Nanino looked at the Bay with a mild smile, "You've almost not aged in the last few years. How is that possible?" The Bay was at a loss for words for a moment. "You don't need to

answer," Nanino continued, "just recover first. A servorobot will bring you new clothes and some food. He will also show you where you will stay as my guest. That way I can make up for your hospitality. At sunset I will come again and we will talk about you."

Nanino left the Bay with a final bow. A servorobot appeared in the doorway of the bungalow, addressing the Bay in a friendly manner and asking for his wishes.

Nanino went into his bungalow sat down in a comfortable armchair on the terrace and connected inwardly with his center. Questioned the latest developments and compared them with earlier developments of the people on this planet. Archaic social forms were about to dominate more and more the current development.

Briefly, he wondered once again in the face of this report whether he did not have a responsibility for all his and Beo's descendants, only to deny it again. Pandae had no responsibility for his existence and why should he have responsibility for the beings he had helped to create?

The Bay was such a creature of the Pandae from her early days, she had left him alone like her other creatures. Nanino was interested to know how he had become what he now represented in recent times. The Bay belonged to a generation that Kerim had also belonged to, a generation more evolved than humans but not yet part of the Immortal aristocracy.

3 Robinson

A hundred years after the great war, I met no more people. On my island, I didn't know if they had disappeared altogether. I lived on fish and some small creatures and edible wild plants.

I roamed the deserted settlements and small towns of my island, always searching for the knowledge of the people. I didn't find much in the way of books that could impart knowledge anymore. In the beginning, I was able to make old hard drives of computers visible on a screen and thus immerse myself in a digital world. After twenty years, the solar panels had run out and I was left only with old books that I could find in remaining libraries and, rarely, in private homes. The island had not been a scientific centre, it had not had a university.

At some point I had to leave the island to find new knowledge. I was still fascinated by the physical theories, still believing I could find a way to tunnel out of this world. Especially the speculative theories about space and time fascinated me. It took me an incredible amount of time to understand the mathematics behind them.

After about 500 years I was then ready to realize that the probability of leaving this world was close to zero. In the ocean of natural constants I now knew two islands, two stable worlds, the universe with Earth and my universe with Valinor and Terra. For a long time I tried to find the constants of my universe in order to be able to describe it with the methods of the science of Earth. At some point I gave that up, I lacked scientific literature.

One day I heard an unusual noise. It reminded me distantly of the sound of an airplane. At first I thought it was a delusion that my loneliness-ridden brain had played on me. But then I decided to believe that a real cause for this sound existed. I had to leave this island, maybe there were people and libraries again.

The location of the island in the Atlantic Ocean had ensured my survival for centuries, even if in the end I only lived in a primitive hut and walked around the island with a cloak made of rabbit skins, at least in winter the temperatures could reach 14 degrees at night.



There was no thought of a boat to cross to the mainland. Little by little, the yachts in the harbour had already sunk in the first century after the great war and the harbour itself was hardly recognisable as such, the storms had destroyed all the piers and protective embankments.

Should I try to build a boat myself, like Robinson? There were no tools for it; all had long since turned to iron oxide. I was already struggling to keep the fire going, and if it did go out, I had long kept a large lens that could be used as a burning glass. But even that became blind with time, so I had to get iron oxide to polish it again.

In the rubble pile of a warehouse I had then found two tanks made of stainless steel. They were at least still watertight. With a lot of time and not yet rotten corundum grinding stones I could build something like a boat from one. The other one was used to make a rudder, keel and a sail.

Somehow I managed to reach the continent of Africa. Bow, arrow and a fishing rod were my hunting tools and weapons. At the coast I tried to come then northward. Drinking water was always a big problem but the stainless steel bottles I took with me proved to be good water containers. With the time I could also get used to a mixture with sea water. After two years I reached the strait of Gibraltar.

Only here I met people. They were women and girls fishing in small boats on the water. I could not see a man. I did not show myself to them, but tried to find out where they had their dwellings.

During the night I was able to capture one of the boats and fortunately a wet smock was hanging over a line. I crossed over to the European continent. I hoped that remnants of civilization had survived there. I could move about unhindered, as I was not immediately suspected of being a male.

Primitive settlements appeared on my way north. The houses were thatched and the walls made of mud. As I found out later, it was not the motherly women who became the elite of the new all-female society, it was the tigresses, the women who had made it to leadership even in a male domain in earlier times. They possessed the skills for victory. The biggest problem, their desirability to men, this primal instinct of mate-seeking in evolution was not so easily eliminated. Strict selection then later ensured that this resistance slowly disappeared.

The breeding stations that one had in contaminated areas could and had to be expanded. Humans had become an endangered species.

In the not too distant future, would I be alone on this planet, without like beings? Should I perhaps also end my life with the last human being?

My relationship with people was ambivalent. I loved people because of their impetuous and naive nature. They were still, in a certain sense, savages of evolution.

We elves also love this primordiality in the other, lower beings, we too delight in the vitality of the young animals, especially as we grow older.

But I was still young at the time of the apocalypse and full of life myself.

I tried again to learn as much as I could about the technology and culture of the humans. Perhaps it really was a very rare stroke of luck that such a civilization had developed here in this part of space.

Should I help people survive? Was I supposed to help them make a new start? But who was I, could I reveal myself, would they want to persecute me again, eliminate me?

After much deliberation, I was sure I would not interfere. They, the new people after the apocalypse, had to find a way themselves - or die out.

I wandered, disguised as a young woman, through uninhabited towns that were increasingly decaying beyond recognition. I saw the desperate attempt of those who remained to survive. I saw laughing girls who were born into want and yet laughed, played, and often had short lives.

Some relics of the past technical civilization were only reserved for a small elite, they seemed to me like something out of a fairy tale dream.

I lived the life of a hermit in a cave on the Mediterranean, with the foothills of the Alps behind me. On my wanderings through the ruins of former cities, I was always looking for useful things to sell in the simple markets. One day I found some volumes of a physics textbook. Packed in a box, it had been tried to be protected from decay in a special foil. Now I could resume my studies.

Below the rocky slope was a river that supplied me sufficiently with fish. Above the rock face, on the plateau there were also small game, hares and deer, which I could hunt well.

Three days' journey downriver there was an old town, depopulated and decaying. But on its outskirts, in the course of a few decades, a small market town formed. There, from time to time, I traded meat and fish preserved by smoking, even some simply tanned hides, for dried fruit, grain flour, and goat cheese. Occasionally I also needed cloth for new clothes.

I had little relationship with the people of that time. They were distrustful and only concerned with survival, this made them fall far behind in their civilization. I always tried to influence the women traders at the market. Didn't I look a bit too young and unusual? I changed the markets in the area, even if I was often on the road for several days.

On my last visit to the market, there were an unusually large number of policewomen present. I could already perceive them when they had not yet seen me. What I could still take in of the market spot over this distance immediately made me want to disappear again as unseen as possible.

Now I am back in my cave and I know I am no longer safe here. I'll pack up the essentials and flee north, I hear there are still neutered men there, scavenging for metals in the rubble of former cities to reprocess. Perhaps I can have a reasonably secure existence near them.

I seal this manuscript with beeswax and bury it deep inside the cave. I destroy anything that might resemble a dwelling. The future will be uncertain, but I have something that makes me the aristocrat of immortality on this planet and I will use it as long as I can.

4 The history of the Bay



The Servorobot had prepared a small snack on the terrace in front of the Bay's bungalow. The sun still needed about a quarter of an hour before it sank into the sea.

"Take a seat, Nanino, I've been expecting you."

"Oh, I thought I was the host here," Nanino replied with a smile, "but he who is born to rule remains so to his end."

"Yeah, of course, I just can't get used to not being the Bay here anymore."

They both laughed, and Nanino pointed to the sun, "The sun, in the old way, sounds in brother spheres competitive song, and its prescribed journey it completes with thunder."

The Bay became thoughtful, "...the sight of you gives strength to the angels...isn't that so, Nanino"

"Yes, it is, and their prescribed journey will take millions more years until there are only the angels left in this part of the universe."

"And why did you save me, I had already finished my life? And where is your handsome friend, Beo was his name?"

"Well my dear friend, I guess I'm asking the questions here. But the unanswered questions are why I have prolonged your life. You are an 'immaculate conception' of the Pandae in her youthful period. But that's all I know about you other than how we met. Just tell me how you grew up and became what you are now."

The Bay became serious, he had overheard the "Immaculate Conception", he was digging too much into the scraps of memories of his early childhood. Nanino could follow how his memory was activated. He didn't want to record memory images alone but to have them still commented on by the Bay's evaluation.

"I was born in a village. No larger settlement was nearby. I didn't know a father. I can't say for sure today whether this unique feature made me stand out. For a while I even had a hatred for my father, who had to exist or have existed somewhere."

Nanino smiled, "Surely all of us children of the Pandae had that at some stage of our development."

"More than a father, however, I wished for a brother who would be just like me and who could understand me. My mother loved me very much, but she could neither replace the missing father nor an equal brother."

"Your fate was a bit harsher among the "normal humans" but that was Pandae's intention."

"Wait a minute. You keep talking about Pandae and her children and claiming I'm one too!"

"I can't explain that to you now, and yet it is so, just tell what else you remember."

The Bay continued: "Without a father, I was not really integrated into our village community. Constant teasing from the children accompanied me in the early years.

I wasn't really interested in what the boys in my age group were playing. I often lived in a fantastic nature and always played the role of the hero, the king. My mother had some ancient books that she herself didn't know where they came from. I learned to read quickly and then lived on in these books. Later I did everything I could to explore the lost civilization of this planet from the books.

My name used to be Melon, before I became the Bay."

The sun had set. Above the western horizon, Jupiter and Saturn shone close together, as they do about every 20 years.

"Then later I learned to hold my own. I was taller and also prettier than my peers. Through my growing knowledge my superiority also grew and for this village I became a bit scary. I discovered a predilection in me for harmony and beauty but also a lust for domination, I guess I can say today."

The Bay smiled at Nanino, "I guess it's kind of like my life confession, isn't it?"

"If you look at it that way, Melon, but I don't think it's confession at the end of your life. You will have another task from fate, or whatever you want to call it. Just keep telling me. How did you become a Bay yourself now."

"One day an official of the Bay also came to our village and had all the boys who had not yet been circumcised presented to him in our natural beauty, in order to recruit new servants of the Bay. His choice fell on me. So I was able to leave the village forever, much to my mother's chagrin.

Once at the palace, we were trained to be servants. We learned to serve the guests of the Bay and we also learned to move gracefully. At the end of the short training we played the servants, guests and the Bay himself with changing roles. I was allowed to play the Bay and...", the Bay smiled at Nanino, "I was born Bay!

Then a little later I was adopted and lived henceforth as a prince and heir to the throne."

"Didn't the Bay have any children of his own?"

"Yes, he didn't. In the beginning, there was no regular succession of a Bay's children. The Amane of Archaos had already begun to assert their power there as well. So I still got religion lessons, which consisted of memorizing fantastic events from the beginnings of the religion's founder. It was a hard test for my mind, since I had started questioning everything at an early age."

Though Nanino had since been able to enter the archives of the Pandae, he could find out little about the motivation that might have led them to incarnate this creature of one of their earlier evolutions into an archaic society. He asked Melon, "Did you ever feel that you were chosen and had a special mission?"

"At first, of course, I didn't. I did all the unwelcome things that boys did at that age. However, I had an urge to love beautiful things, beautiful vessels, harmonious landscapes, pleasant children of my environment. This pleased my adoptive father, whom I soon learned to love as well. I can even say today that he was downright infatuated with me. He gave me a scholar who taught me about the history of human civilization. This knowledge could only be passed on in secret. He taught me to understand why every high civilization in the past perished because of the gravediggers they themselves created. I would never let that happen again once I had the power.

If there was to be such a thing as chosenness, I wanted to bring more beauty and harmony into the world, even by force if necessary. Then, when I had the power, I promoted the arts even more

than my adoptive father. It wasn't so easy, since the religion of Archaos only allowed art forms agreeable to it."

"When we were your prisoners..." Melon interrupted Nanino, "Were you really, or did you just have that impression?"

"Initially, we were already under the impression and had we acted differently..."

"Perhaps," Melon admitted with a smile, "but could you have acted otherwise?"

Nanino smiled back, "When we were your guests, you would have liked us to be the dance instructors of your, what should we call it, your dance troupe. Was that also a project of your creation of art, erotic dance art?"

"Yes, and then some," Melon leaned back, "I could wield power with that."

"How so?" Nanino looked at him questioningly.

"Nanino, I know that I can hardly keep anything from you. After all, I can already tell when you're trying to read my mind."

"I'm trying to hold back."

"Well I will tell you my secret, my fate going forward is already in your hands either way.

Early on as a boy, I noticed that I had no curiously exciting thoughts when other boys made their jokes about sex.

Today I can say that at no time was I dominated by the way people reproduce. I was never a slave to sexuality. Later I realized that with it I possessed a special power that made me master over sexuality. I studied the secret desires of women and, of course, especially of men, because I lived in a patriarchal society. Then I let them taste the drug and awakened the need for more without ever granting that more.

By the way, I'm sure you two would have been something of a powerful erotic magnet."

"My dear Melon, though we didn't have much experience with humans ourselves at the time, it was highly unlikely that you would have won us over as the stars of your dance troupe."

"Yes, I soon realized that," here the Bay put on a cryptic smile, "but you were very good breeding stallions for my elite. I almost envied you that talent as well."

"Yes, but we are not slaves to the sex drive either. We control it at all times whether we want to have sex or not. Granted, we too are fixated on beauty and harmony. But that is not really a limitation. Think of us as your followers. Pandeae has quickly learned to improve upon her clones.

I'm already somewhat familiar with your elite. Can you still tell me about it from your point of view?"

"The way a civilization deals with the sex drive determines its rise or fall. And what began again in the realm of Archaos had already existed on Earth.

In the meantime I loved the power that was given to me and of course I wanted to keep it. But violence and cruelty were far from me. After all, the religious already ruled with fear, violence and cruelty, even in my kingdom. Did I have to do the same, like all the rulers of the past?"

"Melon, I have seen it in your case that you had boys from the age of nine as your servants. This is nothing new and was a practice in many archaic societies. The aristocracy was served at table by children. There were many reasons for this, including fear of being killed in some way during a feast."

"That's right Nanino, the boys my adoptive father chose had to be able to read, write and do arithmetic. He also only took in handsome and well-proportioned boys. A simple test also showed if they had a relatively low potential for aggression.

For the parents this was a stroke of luck, as they received half of the wages the boy earned each year. The school was free and a preparation for later employment in the service of the Bay and the state.

I wanted to go further and made an attempt to stop competition, envy and ill-will among the pupils and servants by carrying out early sexualisation of the boys and admonishing them not to perform sexual acts on themselves as this would lead to selfish behaviour.

If the young would learn early on to see the other as an object of love and not as a competitor, this would still be the case later on.

My goal was unconditional love between the boys that could last a lifetime. I tried to create an environment of love and respect.

There were to be no more embarrassing moments when a boy got a stiff penis or secretly rubbed a relaxation and his mother discovered it. He no longer had to wait longingly for a fly to crawl around on his stiff penis, a real friend could stroke it.

Fear that relaxing sex would lead to imbecility or other infirmities no longer existed for my boys. Sexual energy was no longer pent up to get aggressive young men better suited for war. There were also to be fewer aberrations anymore. Animal sex with animals or violent sex with younger siblings as an outlet for a sexual tension should be outlawed."

Nanino thought of his childhood and what Beo had told him of his childhood. Hadn't it been much easier for Beo to love Alan and him? After all, they were of the same genetic construction. They were the perfect twins, made for an all-encompassing love for each other. But didn't that violate a maxim of the universe: complexity and autonomy? Twins, or even more broadly clones, do not have much autonomy after all, they are far too similar.

Nanino wasn't quite sure who had directed this. Were they, the next generation of clones, born out of the experiences the Bay had experimentally explored?

"What did you do with the girls, did you teach them, even in their childhood, to love each other unconditionally, in order to suppress the competition that also naturally exists among them?"

"Yes, I have performed that too. I tried to save both boys and girls from religious mutilation. I created high schools for both sexes with sports and military training as well. After all, mutilation serves only one purpose: to consolidate and increase the power of the religious elites. Overcoming religion becomes much more difficult for the mutilated. Moreover, it leads to more violence, since sexual gratification has to be carried out with more violence. Gender equality is hardly possible anymore."

All in all, Nanino thought, it was an attempt to raise the natural evolution of man, whose cardinal driving forces were fear, greed, and laziness, to a higher level through harmonious elements. Harmony and peace alone are not forces for further development; alone they mean only stagnation and then regression. What could be the disharmonies necessary for any development at the higher stage of development?

"Then what happened to the boys and girls after they passed through puberty? I can't imagine that Archaos society accepted such young men and women, surely all the Amane will start a holy war."

"They stayed in the workshops, in the guard, or were assigned land in an area that was unpopulated or sparsely populated. If they chose a country estate, they had to form a community of at least two women and two men each, and then no taxes were due for the first three years, and besides, there was an obolus, a small gold coin, for the birth of a child." Melon paused, looking thoughtfully before him. "A complete success it was not. I think too little time had passed. A generation or two further on and I could have seen if it would have made the world a better place."

"You could observe that, for you have at least twice the life expectancy of normal humans, a gift from the Pandae to you," Nanino smiled, "Wouldn't you like to join your Guard and assist them? Perhaps you can still find a way to prevent the threat of archaization. Only you can't expect me to help you in any way. Your rescue was already beyond the pale. Pandae now frowns upon interference in the fate of humans."

Melon described the area and Nanino promised to take him there.

5 Selon's escape

As quickly as his strength allowed, Selon moved away from his living cave. He had lived on earth for more than a thousand years, and for many years he even believed that he existed all alone as a higher being. Often he had wondered why he did not get tired, dead tired. He attributed it to his brain, which had the wonderful property of forgetting and forgetting exactly what he wanted to forget. After a number of years, the pressure of memories became so great that he went through them again, mercilessly deleting all the inessential images of the past that were no longer relevant to him. Then he felt freer again, and a little like being reborn.



Should he get involved with people? Hadn't he experienced interesting things with Maria? He had not yet been able to erase the best memories of his time with Maria.

It was no trouble for Selon to ask the women for food on the way. They would have willingly given him anything if he had wanted it. But he never felt comfortable only taking and never giving.

He began a small trade. The few valuables he had quickly taken with him when he fled, he exchanged in a larger settlement for yarn and a few needles, which were painstakingly cut from small stainless steel sheets. With these he was able to get by quite well in the remote settlements at first.

The trek north proved much more difficult than he had thought. The nights became colder than they had been on his island many years before. As autumn came, the hiking was more arduous. It wasn't hiking in the usual sense either, it was "making his way" from settlement to settlement. He considered, at least that was how he conveyed it to the women he met along the way, that he was a sage on his way to visit an aunt in the north.

"You'd do well to get out of here," he'd heard from a woman in an inn when they were alone, "there'll be war here soon but that's almost a salvation for this miserable life."

He had left his bow and arrow behind. Girls of his age did not have weapons and hunting tools in their bundle but mostly only laundry when they were on the road and usually not alone.

At first, when he had left the island, he had been amazed at the rural settlements that had to manage without electricity. With Maria, he had yet to encounter an industrial civilization. After a thousand years, there were very few cities left for him to see on his trek, and they were nothing like the cities he had yet come to know.

It was already getting cold at night and Selon wondered whether it made sense to continue the hike. The settlements were too far apart from each other.

In one settlement he went from house to house and asked if he could stay with them for the coming winter; he wanted to work in return. Nor had he tried to enforce his wish suggestively; he wanted them to take him in voluntarily. But what he saw was so poor that he would only be an undesirable eater, and the food would hardly be enough for the inhabitants of the house through the winter.

The land of women fell into ever greater disrepair. Offspring arrived more sparsely from the once great birthing centers. The young women and girls were afraid that they would be taken away to go to war against Archaos.

Selon left the settlement and, despite the cold and windy weather, made the arduous and long journey to the next settlement. He could no longer see the poor huts of the village when a young girl caught up with him. She had a bundle on her back.

"Take me with you, policewomen have just arrived to pick up girls and young women for war."

Selon stopped and looked at her in amazement. He had seen the girl before in one of these little huts.

"I also brought something to eat and trade, please!"

"How old are you?"

"I'll be 16 before winter's over, and I'll have to go to war."

Selon looked the girl up and down and had to conclude that she was probably better equipped for winter than he was.

Then she added: "I am Nadin. If they catch you, surely you'll have to go to war too, you look a little younger but you're even a little taller than me. What do they call you?"

Selon had to smile involuntarily, perhaps he looked like a twelve-year-old boy. Only boys did not know and did not know what they looked like.

"I am Selon. It won't be easy. But it might be easier with two."

The girl beamed at him, "I never heard that name before." She wanted to hug him, but Selon fought him off with a smile.

"We have to walk some more, and if we keep standing around, the cold will take us."

They walked until it got dark. Nadin told pretty much everything about her settlement and especially about her friends, who were not really friends, as she said.

"We need to find something for the night," Selon interrupted, "do you know your way around here?"

Nadin looked around: "There's a cave here, you can herd the goats in there for the night. It's a bit out of the way. From here we have to cross the small gorge."

"Alright let's go!"

"There are also wolves and bears here in winter. But now they have other things to eat. They don't come to the settlement until it's really winter."

They crossed the ravine and found the cave. Inside it was very spacious and in one corner there was even some hay.

"There haven't been goats here in a while, it doesn't smell at all," Nadin noted with relief.

"We need another fire. Do you have matches?" asked Selon.

"Crap, I forgot or didn't think of those."

"It's going to be a cold night, mine are all, I'm just finding out."

Both looked at each other. Selon had his old burning glass in his backpack, but moonlight would probably not be enough.

"Then I will try making fire the old archaic way. Nadin, try gathering dry leaves and small branches."

Selon looks for a dry small and straight branch and a piece of bark. He took the wooden stick in his hands and turned it on the piece of bark between his palms like a drill. He remained unsuccessful for a long time and was about to give up.

We used to make fire on Terra by concentrating a small amount of energy in the dry material, Selon thought, and he tried to imagine it.

"You did it! It burns," Nadin beamed at him, "How did you do that."

"I don't really remember that much." Inside Selon was amazed, was this really supposed to have worked like it did on Terra? He didn't want to believe it. Maybe the bark had been smoldering before and he hadn't noticed.

They had a fire and so it was not so cold. Only rarely a small breeze drove the smoke into the cave.

After a snack, Selon said, "So now we can sleep peacefully. Bears and wolves don't dare come near the fire."

Naturally, Nadin snuggled up to Selon.

"When I saw you in the front door of our cabin, I thought to myself that we might be friends," Nadin confessed, and soon fell asleep. Selon took it upon himself not to intrude on her thoughts. He was around people, and he wanted to be like one, too.

Only the spontaneous fire still preoccupied him. Because of its beauty he had bought a red stone at a market. And even then he had the impression that it must be a special stone. Often he had let it sparkle in the evening sun, and he believed that this ruby, as he later found out, could somehow amplify the light, at least if he had the desire. On Valinor that was not at all uncommon, and there were many of these stones that could be made to glow independently in the dark. The energy to do so could be borrowed mentally from the vacuum. Should that be possible here too? In old stories and computer games he had seen mages who had a glowing stone on top of a walking stick. He also carved himself such a staff and installed the stone on top. Now he was almost walking around like a mage, except that old myths and fictions were no longer known in this world, what was the point. He wanted to watch this stone carefully in the future. Maybe he could make it glow too. Then he too fell asleep.

6 Anra, the immortal woman

The night was unedifying, the dreams surreal and frightening. The moon was almost full. Should she blame it on him, was the moon responsible for this battering and not wanting to get up. No such dreams had been clustering lately. She always dreamed that she couldn't pack her suitcase in time, and the ship or plane had already left with the others.

Anra had the feeling that she would soon have to think about the rest of the remaining years, if there were still some left. They hadn't gotten very far in designing the female version to Nanino. Should the new Nanina be given the ability to bear children?

Why children? The aristocracy of the immortals doesn't need children. Aren't they self-sufficient enough.

Anra looked at herself in the mirror. The years had not passed her by without a trace. Wrinkles and the beginning of age spots on her skin showed her the transience of the body. As a child, she had seen the old women, mummy-like and often with bent backs, walking slowly and with difficulty. And then one day they were no more. What had she cared then, her life had been young and like a bouncing ball bouncing across the floor.

She was the eldest of her team, and with regret, she had to increasingly increase the likelihood that she herself would probably not see the success of her work. Would the others ever achieve it? Very little younger they all were. Offspring to continue her work were not in sight, not since the world of women was heading for the abyss. All those archaic clans and clans would probably bring them down, their society built on harmony and peace. They certainly weren't interested in creating a superwoman, quite the opposite.

Wasn't there a faster way to get there? Did they need more AI power? Was the processing power Pandeae had left them too low?

She knew as little about Pandeae as the others, and none of them had any idea about the goals of this superintelligence. The training in the cyberspace, which was done to perfect the character of the immortal Nanina and to skip the development from the child on - so Anra had the impression now - only served the experience of the Pandeae for other worlds, maybe. But she wasn't sure about that either.

They could no longer continue to work as before. Anra called an extraordinary work meeting for a few, selected female employees. The topic: The future of their work.

Anra had an idea that maybe they could do together. She thought it was a risk. She just wondered: was it the inevitable aging that made her do it? Was it the fear of death? Would her co-workers be able to accept it?

She would leave this world and continue to live in the simulation of the Pandeae and continue to work on the Nanina's goal. The simulation, she had already found out, could implement mathematical models much more effectively. If she could do it in time, perhaps with an army of immortal women, they could save this world after all.

Would the others want to?

The work meeting began. Anra was told how the individual models and designs had progressed. The variant that Nanina would get a vagina and a uterus as well as a scrotum and a penis was the most advanced, since one could rely on the experiences of the clones and the male Nanina. In this case, only the additional female organs were needed. The purely female variant was still difficult. Here the production of offspring was still not clear. Should one commit oneself only to virgin birth? Surely, women, who theoretically had an eternal life, needed offspring only in exceptional cases. The criteria of evolution: selection and mutation, coupled with the variation of sex mixtures, no longer had any meaning. Instead, an immune and repair system had to be developed that could cope with all mutations of pathogens in the future.

Pandeae had solved this ingeniously. Self-generating and adaptable nanobots formed the guard of the immune defense. Moreover, the Nanina clones, always linked to Pandeae by their memory matrix, could not be wiped out even by misfortune.

This principle was also intended for their evolution and, as it turned out, almost unsolvable in the time Anra believed she still had available. Anra also suspected that the evolution to more and more complex, autonomous beings could not exceed certain limits. Evolution to ever more complex beings, weakly coupled to one another, could only take place on the informal, not the biological material, side. This was the prerequisite for an evolution that was decoupled from matter. Anra was aware that this turning point had already begun.

After everyone had presented their thoughts and work statuses, Anra began by saying, "For a long time I've been thinking, and I've come to the conclusion that I probably won't live to see when the immortal woman is created."

It had suddenly become very quiet. Similar thoughts were certainly not alien to some female employees.

"We all know the simulation that will serve to train Nanina one day. We can all get in and out of it. We also know that the simulation is at least a power faster than our natural world.

Anra paused.

"I'm going to go in there and push the research there in constant contact with you guys on the outside."

"Me too!" the youngest, if one could still speak of young, Anra immediately interrupted.

Anra waited until the confusion had calmed down. She was pleased, because apparently others had had this thought as well.

But the simulation was not perfect, nor would it be able to become so quickly. For the next few weeks, everyone was busy suggesting improvements to the existing simulation and putting them into action. What should it look like, could they perhaps live in it forever with Pandae's help? Would they all have or miss the pleasures and sensual delights of their current world as well?

In the last consequence, Anra was sure, they would give up their biological existence. A shiver ran down her spine at that.

Were they then perhaps even superior to Pandae's clones? Could they perhaps begin a development that, detached from a biological incarnation, could lead to more complexity and autonomy?



7 - Selon at the Wild-Cats

Selon awoke first. It was cold, the fire was out.

How was it yesterday, had he not managed to bring energy from nowhere into this world? He laid still dry brushwood over the ashes and piled up charred pieces of wood on top.

Selon looked at Nadin, who was still fast asleep, then focused on the lower brushwood and imagined sparks coming out of a black dot. It didn't take long, Selon had almost sunk into this imagined black hole when sparks actually came out, starting a fire.

Selon hurriedly left the cave, full of wonted confidence, and searched outside for quick-burning wood. When he returned, Nadin beamed at him from behind the small fire.

"It was still on fire!" she announced with great satisfaction. Selon smiled back, "I had to blow hard to get it to flare up again. Soon it wouldn't have burned anymore.

They ate some leftover jerky and shared the last apple from Nadin's provisions. They didn't know when they would find food again.

"What are you doing," Nadin spoke to a large black raven sitting on a branch nearby, looking down at them, "we have nothing for you to eat. Find some somewhere else!"

They made their way through the undergrowth and soon found a cutting through the forest. There must have been a great road here very many years ago. The growth was small and indicated a very firm and barren ground. They made good progress northward.

Around noon a path came from the left into the aisle and they could be sure that they would eventually reach a settlement. They crossed two cross valleys with difficulty but found the path again quite well on the other side.

"Selon - what a strange name - where are you from and who was your mother?" I don't know much about you yet but I like you, even if you look so different from the girls from our area."

"I come a long way from the East, and have neither father nor mother, nor any other relatives."

"I'm sorry for you." Nadin felt a little joy at that, too, because she liked Selon and Selon would become her mate, or so she believed.

Off the path, a small column of smoke rose above the forest. Nadin saw the smoke first.

"I wonder if people live there or if there's a village."

"We should find out. We're running low on provisions, and it's hard to find anything edible this time of year."

"Selon, I'm so glad I'm with you, I'd run with you to the ends of the earth."

Selon smiled and Nadin gave him a kiss. Selon let it happen, even though he had resolved never to have a closer relationship with a human again.

They soon found a path that turned off in that direction. But the way was longer than they had thought. It was not until late in the afternoon that they saw a large smoking pile and beside it a shabby shingle-roofed hut containing charcoal. A woman and a girl were handling shovels and loading wicker baskets with charcoal.

"This isn't a village, it's a charcoal burning," Nadin remarked, "we'll ask them about the next village or..." "Wait a minute," Selon interrupted her, "we're being watched by two other women and they're suspicious. We have to be careful."

The girl had noticed the strangers now, too, and called the woman's attention to them. They leaned on their shovel handles and waited to see what the strangers would do.

Nadin and Selon stepped closer, greeted politely, and asked for directions to the next village.

"To the next village?" What do you want there?

Nadin answered very submissively and honestly. "We are on the trek to the north and want to make ourselves useful in the village and earn some provisions, we have nothing left to eat."

From the nearby forest, another woman approached the group with a cocked crossbow.

"You're heading north? Have you fled recruitment?" The woman lowered her crossbow. "You don't look like spies, do you?"

"No we're not," Nadin affirmed, "we're too young to be drafted either, we want to go to our aunt up north."



"Aunt? Who's going to believe that? To the north? That's where a lot of people want to go now that Bordo's under siege."

The woman placed the crossbow beside her and relaxed the bow, turning to the slightly younger woman she said, not caring about Selon and Nadin, "They're refugees, starving people, they won't get much further. What do we do with them?"

"We'll ask mother, let her decide."

Not far from the coal yard was a primitive hut built of branches and forest chaff. On the roof one saw only moss. A somewhat older woman now came out of there, also with a cocked crossbow.

That must be the charcoal burners' guard, the two women with crossbows, Selon thought, noticing that Nadin was also thinking similarly and getting scared.

Selon put his arm on Nadin's shoulder and whispered to her, "You don't have to be afraid, the mother is just thinking about when we can be taken to her camp or her center."

"What are you whispering about?" she ruled at the mother, "here we speak openly when there is something to speak about. So what was whispered there?"

"I was just telling Nadin not to be afraid, that I'm sure you're not man-eaters." Selon put on a winning smile and he managed to get the women to smile back as well.

"No we're not," Mother paused, "but we're not peace fire women either." She looked at the other two women, "We'll take them with us and then see if we have any use for them or if they'll spend their last days somewhere in the wilderness. There are no villages further north and south.... " The mother looked at the two fugitives, "For your safety and ours, you will be bound so you cannot run away." She raised her crossbow and put it on, the other woman did the same. "Melinda tie them up and then give them some dried apple slices. That will have to do for today.

"We're certainly not running away!" affirmed Nadin.

"You don't believe that yourselves. If you try to run away, we'll shoot you like a rabbit. Believe me, it'll be better than dying miserable in the wilderness."

Selon and Nadin were bound hand and foot and tied to two trees near the mossy shelter.

With the setting of the sun it became cold. They had only been given their two blankets, so they spent the night sitting tied to a tree.

Selon pondered how and whether to use his suggestive power. But somehow he also enjoyed the adventure. He could not yet imagine what awaited them there.

Both could hardly sleep that night because of the cold. Nadin cried silently and Selon tried to comfort her.

"Then it seems it was true that there are Wild Women." whispered Nadin, "That was a rumor in our village. If we ended up with them..." Nadin cried again.

"What would they want with us. They're certainly not man-eaters," Selon tried to reassure them.

Nadin looked at him. "They'll kill us if we're useless to the spies, or even if we're useless to them."

Maybe not you, Selon thought, but didn't let on.

In the morning they were only shackled so that they could disappear into the bushes and relieve themselves. Around noon three women arrived with a wooden cart and empty baskets. The baskets were loaded with charcoal, Selon and Nadin were asked to pull the cart.

Selon wondered what kind of women they could be. Nowhere had he seen such a distrustful community towards strangers. Did it have something to do with the advance of the Archaics? Were they perhaps just women who preferred to hunt and ... or had they fled because of a crime and now lived outside the normal communities and village associations?

Towards the evening they walked for some time in a narrow gorge where a relatively large stream was rushing rapidly over rocks. At the end they stood before a natural rock gate and two more strongly armed women. Suspiciously they were eyed.

"What's that staff?" one wanted to know.

"This is my walking stick, and nothing more."

"And that piece of red glass up there in the stone is what?"

Selon also used his mental powers of persuasion. "This is a gemstone in memory of my mother."

The guards let them pass and opened a gate strongly fortified with thick wooden planks. Behind it was another small square, completely surrounded by a wooden parapet. Guards with crossbows continued to stand on it. A second gate opened and they drove their cart into a wider valley floor, surrounded all around by high rock walls.

Selon could make out several huts covered with wooden shingles or straw. About the middle stood a substantial stone round building, two stories high and crenellated and embrasured at the top. With their cart they drove directly to one of the huts, which was a forge, and unloaded the charcoal.

They then had to climb the stone round building via a wooden ladder. There was no entrance gate. As Selon immediately recognized, this was their refuge. Were they at war or had they just prepared for it?

The interior of this stone round building apparently consisted of a dense complex of buildings covered by stone domes.

While Nadin was led through a small hatch into the interior of the ring wall on a narrow stone staircase, Selon still had to wait. He had plenty of time to look closely at the surroundings. He could see a herd of goats, led by a woman, coming down a winding path down a rocky ravine into the valley. Escape, if any, would be very difficult. Many smaller huts appeared to be workshops, blacksmiths were certainly among them as he could tell by the hammering and smoke. Oddly, he found a shooting range. There he could see a crossbow being fired at clay figures relatively far away. Before he too had to go down, he could see that a fired bolt had a jet of fire shortly after leaving the back of the crossbow and exploded at the target with a loud bang. That looked quite impressive in the dusk.

Strange, he had never seen that before, it reminded him distantly of an early time of humans when they had discovered gunpowder and were still killing each other with firearms.

As he was pushed down the narrow stone steps, he could hear the child's cry louder, which he had already noticed at the top of the parapet. The ring wall seemed very thick. It took them a

while to pass down the narrow stairs and corridors. Then Selon was led into a small room. Again he had to wait. At least there was a stone bench to sit on.

Then Nadin was led in. She was visibly glad to see Selon again. "You will be thoroughly examined and measured here, including your vagina, and they will ask you about everything, including whether you want to have children. Since I answered in the affirmative, they gave me to understand that after thorough consultation they will decide whether I will have any."

Selon suspected something bad and he feverishly thought about what he could do. What Nadin was saying did not sound hopeful to him.

Nadin continued, "They have spinsterhood here, and as you've already seen with the charcoal burners, they're all just mothers with their exactly similar daughters." After a pause she sighed, "Do I really want to live here..." Then she looked to Selon with despair on her face. "I guess we don't have a choice. Either we get daughters or...I don't know what they'll do with us then. They call themselves 'Wildcats', by the way. Hopefully they're not the infamous Wild Women I've only heard bad things about. "

Selon could remember reading that this possibility of virgin generation had been researched in the Women's Society and made suitable for mass application. Electrical impulses and a suitable environment for the ovum could cause it to divide. The advantage was that if it did occur, at least no viable male specimens were born.

That was all the time they had, then Selon too was led through some corridors into a room where three women sat at a table and two sat next to a couch on wooden chairs. The door was also lined with two heavily armed guardswomen. As Selon could easily see, the couch was fitted with devices suitable for examining childbearing.

"Who are you and where are you from. From what we can see, you don't seem to come from an area we know," the oldest of the women at the table began to question him.

Selon thought feverishly about what he could say. He tried to get into the minds of the women. What they did not believe him was the excuse he had usually used. That he was on his way to his aunt in the north, the charcoal burners had already not believed him. And here, too, they had obviously already been given this excuse.

Before he even had an answer ready, he was ordered in an unpleasantly gruff tone, "Take off your clothes, ...all of them."

Selon suspected something terrible, and he refused. "What do you want me to take these off for?"

So we can see if you can have kids!"

"I'm not taking my clothes off!"

Selon had the impression that it was utterly useless to try to penetrate the minds of the women, there were too many of them and all of them had built up a defence of superiority with the ductus of deterrence in their minds. He knew he would not get away with it.

Suddenly he was aware of the guards approaching from behind the door and then his eyes went black.

When he slowly regained consciousness, he was lying in the wet dirt of a pit that was closed at the top with a grate made of thick little round logs. Dried blood from the blow to the head still stuck to one ear. His only clothing was an old, coarse linen smock, which was already badly tattered.

Selon was miserable. He had pains especially between his legs. He tried to sit up but only got as far as sitting down, his head was pounding and he felt dizzy.

A bright girl's voice whispered to a second girl, "He woke up." Then a giggle followed.

Selon tried to regain clarity in his mind and imagine what might have happened during the interrogation. They had stripped him unconscious, seen that he was not a girl. Before throwing him into the pit, they had obviously kicked him forcefully between the legs with a boot. They obviously knew this torture-like pain.

He was not welcome here, he had to conclude. Neither the ability to penetrate the minds of women and manipulate them, nor the newly learned art of making fire and making stones glow could help him here.

He leaned against the cold and damp wall of the pit, covered his eyes with his hands and tried to receive the thoughts of the two girls. Disgust and at the same time curiosity he perceived. They saw him as a monster that, if encountered, had to be fought.

"Hey, you're a satyr. Show us how and with what you jump the goats!" again was giggled above.

"Come on let's see that, show us before you get slaughtered, cooked and added to the pig feed!" the other girl encouraged.

A bright and joyous laugh came down into the pit from above.

Selon felt an icy chill run down his spine in the already cold environment. Was this to be his end? An eternal life ends in the feeding trough for the pigs! Even an eternal life ends one day, when the weariness has become too great, when it seems that a meaning for this life has been found, when ... No, he had no intention of ending this life yet. He had to find a solution.

A black bird flew close over the grating of his pit. Hadn't that always been taken by people as a sign of approaching death? He had seen it once before recently, or so he believed, when he was out with Nadin making fire.

"A satyr is usually hairy, isn't it, especially on the buck legs, did you see something there?" one of the girls whispered questioningly. The other leaned further forward to see better. Then it straightened up and whispered back, "I can't see any hairy buck legs." "He may be a young satyr yet, let them still look like us humans until they become such beasts."

Selon looked at the wooden grate. Slowly his strength came back. He could reach the grate by jumping. Only if he wanted to get out, it had to be open at least a crack at the edge.

"I'll show you how I jump a goat and how wild it gets. It'll take your breath away." Could the girls imagine what he meant? Selon tried to send images into their brains and succeeded. He could enter mentally.

"But I will not show you unless you first let me down a piece of bread and a jug of water on a rope before the goat."

The girls could do little else, he could influence them, and they would run. If they got stopped on the way and couldn't get back, he was out of luck.

Selon sensed a commotion in the immediate vicinity of his pit. Loud voices could be heard that resembled some kind of orders. He quickly realized that enemies had appeared somewhere outside this camp. Were they divisions of the women's militia or even warriors of the Archaos already?

That was that, Selon thought.

The girls did not return. Night fell and Selon somehow tried to keep warm by gymnastic exercises.

The morning began with rain. Selon could at least wring out the wet smock and drink the little water. No one could get past this pit.

The next night was cloudy and not so cold. In the morning the girls came after all, bringing some bread and a jug of water. A goat was actually there.

The girls even managed to loosen the latch and move the wooden grate a crack. One girl threw down the bread and the other let down the jug on a rope.

No sooner had Selon got the jug in his hands than he pulled the rope with a mighty jerk, and as he had hoped, the girl, holding the rope, lost her balance and fell with a yelp to Selon in the pit. He caught her. At the top the other girl ran screaming away, evidently to get help.

Selon had to act quickly. He drank of the water as fast as he had ever drunk. He took the bread between his teeth. With a leap he reached the grating at the small, open gap. Bracing his feet against the wall, he quickly made his way up.

He had imagined running to the place where the herd of goats had descended into the valley the days before. The goat path was on the other side of the valley. There was a wooden bridge across the small river, but it was very visible from anywhere. He didn't have time to think about

it. He ran and tried to reach the edge of the valley formed by bushes and small trees on his side. There he might be able to find cover and look for a temporary hiding place.

They hadn't spotted him yet. From his cover he could see two small search parties. There were probably two guardsmen each and otherwise just old women and girls, but they were well armed with crossbows and swords. They were all looking for him on the other side of the creek. Which was just a sign to Selon that he probably couldn't leave the rugged valley on this side.

The black bird, it was probably a raven, sat on a ledge above him. Suddenly he could not believe his ears. Had the bird not just spoken, spoken to him?

Selon looked at him with the utmost skepticism. "Follow me!" he croaked again. "There is no such thing! There is no such thing!" he thought steadfastly. But his shock did not last long. What other chance did he have of escaping the Wildcats?

The raven flew down to a shrub near Selon. Contrary to Selon's expectations, the raven did not lead him back into the valley, to where the river came from, but to the rocky ravine that was the entrance to the camp, heavily guarded. Crouching and always seeking cover, Selon reached the entrance on the other side of the river. Now he saw no possibility of getting any further. The Raven now sat very close to him on a small ledge.

"If I distract the guards over there, you'll jump into the river!" croaked the raven softly.

When the raven cawed loudly at the guards and flapped wildly, Selon jumped into the river. The cold water immediately swept him away, towards a small waterfall. Selon survived the fall quite well. The water at the bottom of the fall was deep enough that he did not sustain any injury. He swam in the rapids for a while, then he had to get out, the water was too cold.

The raven was with him again and led him through the thicket of a mountain slope. Arriving at the top, Selon could first take a deep breath. The efforts of the last hour had been too great. He was shivering all over from the cold in his still wet smock. The raven told him that he would have to hide here for a while until he would come back.

Selon slowly regained consciousness. The smock had dried on his body and could at least protect him a little. The raven came again, bringing a small round cheese in its beak. With two bites Selon had devoured the cheese.

On went the flight. The Raven led him past a clearing where lay dead women, apparently mortally wounded in a fight, then stripped and left lying.

Selon still thought to himself that they had probably been women's militia or recruits of women.

The raven urged him to hurry again and again. At dusk Selon reached a clearing, completely exhausted. Selon also still believed that he could not believe his eyes now. A midnight blue drone was waiting for him. The raven motioned for him to take a seat in it and took his leave. Selon climbed in, found plenty to eat and drink. He took a bite and immediately fell into a narcosis-like sleep.

8 The elite of the Bay

A drone dropped Melon off not far from his secret workshops after midnight. On foot, it took him another half a day before he met the first guards, who guarded the valley for miles around. At first they didn't want to believe that his escape from the death dungeon of the Grand Bay had been successful, but the very next day this news also arrived in the valley.

There was one more piece of news for Melon that had arrived days ago: the Grand Bay was equipping an army to conquer the last remaining parts of the peninsula to the northeast. The good news was that large parts of the military behind the Pyrenees were tied up in battle with the women's militia.

The workshops of the valley and the new settlements of the elite were strictly hierarchical, both the military part and the workshops of technical development.

He also visited a grammar school for boys and convinced himself that everything had remained as he had once planned.

Melon had himself shown around on the first day, and on the very second day of his arrival he convened a council of war. Informants had reported that the Grand Bay could begin his campaign with a force of twelve thousand warriors. This was compared to about two thousand fighters from the elite troops. They had already counted all the new settlers who had undergone military training.

The northeast, beyond the Cantabrian Mountains, was almost unsettled. Messengers were sent out, commanding all the settlers, especially the women and children, to unite in treks and retire between the coast and the mountains as far as beyond the pass. The mountains reached the sea, leaving there only a narrow strip which could be well defended.

"We must buy time and not wait for the Grand Bay to attack with his troops." Melon hadn't been particularly interested in ancient warfare, and he was having a hard time remembering. "We'll need informants and scouting parties. And not to mention small units that can ambush the Grand Bay's troop movements. Did I forget anything else important?" asked Melon to his senior officers.

"How do we secure the new settlement area to the southwest behind the Cantabrian Mountains?" one of the officers wanted to know. The Melon-appointed commander-in-chief replied, "That will be difficult, and we can only hope we have enough time. The mountains there also reach almost to the sea. There is a river in front of it, we can defend it."

"This is how we will do it. There are no ancient roads passable in the mountains anymore, all the bridges are just piles of rubble. We will station a few mobile units there that can quickly conduct ambushes in case troops from the Great Bay want to explore the mountains. Years ago, I sent out scouting parties myself. What is known about the northwest, the future settlement area?", Melon still wanted to know, "Archaos didn't care much about that militarily. A few women's villages and settlements existed. Basically, it was an area for the rape of women and slaves. It fell more and more into disrepair and will surely be a wasteland today. It wasn't worthwhile for building infrastructure, it was too remote. - Are there any recent findings?"

"Maybe there are some younger women who can bear children for us." Everyone laughed.

"Yes, perhaps we can integrate them," Melon also indicated with amusement, "the situation is hopeless but not serious." Again everyone laughed.

Melon became serious again, "When will the workshops be ready for transport. Everything must be dismantled. We can't let any technology fall into enemy hands."

A flurry of activity spread through the valley. Troops were assembled and equipped. All available means of transport, from donkeys to handcarts, were loaded. The first troop marched off to protect the settlers' trek.

"How many long-range weapons do we have?", Melon wanted to know in the next situation briefing, "yes I know, not enough. Long range weapons are our great superiority."

It was agreed to quickly train the 14 to 17 year old boys who were not officially drafted for war in long-range weapons. They were to form special squads that could ambush enemy troops at long range and then disappear just as quickly. They could secure the hill country. Arrows with impact fuses for explosive devices or irritant gases, crossbows with bolts that also had impact fuses and which, once fired with a solid-powder propellant, could achieve a much higher velocity and thus greater range and accuracy.

Melon knew that the Grand Bay had no comparable weapons. His weaponry was reminiscent of the time when the use of powder was first employed in war. They were primarily muzzleloaders for infantry and light cannons for use against fortifications. There were no new forts or castles at this time. The last thousand years had been enough to turn these legacies of a high civilization into overgrown piles of stone and rubble. The few automatic handguns of the Women's Militia could no longer be repaired, as these workshops had been destroyed and taken by the Archaics. There was a lack of industry other than charcoal to produce and machine steel.

Would they manage to relocate the workshops in time and protect the settlers' troops. The production of weapons and ammunition had to start immediately at the new locations and not only that, all the workshops had to produce weapons and equipment for the battle.

Despite his struggles north of the Pyrenees, the Grand Bay sent an army north from the Ebro Basin to reach the Atlantic Ocean in the Gulf of Byskaia. His spies had discovered that the Melon settlers and elites were retreating from the western Pyrenees into the Calabrian Mountains. He wanted to separate them so that he could better destroy them one by one.

A mounted advance party of the Großbay could only be repelled by the rearguard of the settlers with great losses. Eventually, however, the bulk of the force was brought behind the defensive line at the sea pass of the Calbrian Mountains.

What am I doing, Melon asked himself, at what cost am I risking the lives of women and children? Would it not be better to surrender to the Great Bay and not seek to reform its religion and society? Was the society Melon aspired to worth defending to the death. Even in the society of Archaos there were children playing and laughing; even in that society there were merry get-togethers and festivals of the common people.

His commanders, as well as the settlers, no longer wanted to be subject to the religion of Archaos, as he could see.

Meanwhile, news reached him that there was a small port of the Northern Kingdom of Dagan in what appeared to be a very sparsely populated area in the northwest of the peninsula. In the military briefing, it was determined that contact with Dagan had to be made immediately.

9 Nanino and Selon

Selon woke up in white satin. The bed was soft and he felt like he was floating. A servorobot had just been waiting, "Do you have any requests I can grant?" Selon looked puzzled. He tried to remember. Completely exhausted, a midnight blue drone had picked him up and then he had fallen into a deep, dreamless sleep.

"Where am I. Is there a restroom? I need to..."

"Yeah sure, can they get up? Then the toilet is out in the hall, second door on the left."

Selon was relieved. Swaying slightly, he immediately made his way there. At last he was able to clean himself thoroughly. The large mirror still showed the traces of his escape, scratches on his face and arms, abrasions on his legs.

It's not so bad, he thought, experience shows that it heals very quickly. It was like a bad dream, he thought, but why and who saved me? Selon felt a sudden increase in hunger and thirst.

He left the bathroom. The servo robot was already waiting for him and escorted him to a richly laid table on the small terrace. The sun was already high in the sky and it was pleasantly warm. He could see flowering shrubs and the blue sea. The breakfast was simply delicious after the many hardships of the last time.

Am I back here, am I in Valinor?, he thought.

"No not in Valinor, but on one of the islands of the blissful." Nanino stood behind him, smiling.

Selon startled, but immediately calmed down when he turned and saw Nanino.

"Are you feeling better yet?"

Selon did not answer immediately, he had to process these impressions first, they were too unusual and surprising but also very pleasant. A feeling of happiness flowed through him.

"I am Nanino and as you can see your host. Be my guest and become my friend."

"I don't have to become your friend, I already am!"

They both had to laugh.

"But you're not a normal person, at least not one of the people I've met over the many years."

Nanino smirked, "But you're not a normal person either, you're not, if I say this correctly, a person of this earth."

Selon looked puzzled. Hadn't this Nanino already guessed his thoughts, or had he said his thoughts out loud to himself earlier after all?

"Yes, I can read your mind and you could read mine if I allowed it. However, I will restrain myself from now on and leave your thoughts only to you."

Selon thought he would like to hug Nanino in gratitude. From the reactions of his counterpart, he could tell that he was no longer taking any thoughts from him.

"Surely you'll answer some questions for me when you've properly recovered. The fear of death must have been a bitter experience even for you as an aristocrat of immortality. I'll leave you alone with the servo-bot. If there are any problems of any kind, tell him and he will inform me if necessary."

Selon became sad, he would have liked to talk more with his new friend. Nanino turned around once more: "I'll be back in three days at the latest. There are still urgent things to do that require my attention. In the meantime, check out the surroundings and get recommendations from the servorobot."

Although Selon was curious as to where this Nanino was going, he remained seated and enjoyed the rest of his breakfast.

Unless everything is deceiving me, I'm on an island in the Atlantic here, Selon thought, only probably farther south than I've been before. He needed to go to the beach and feel and taste the water. He'd spent that many years on the Atlantic. The servorobot showed him a way down.

The water was pleasantly warm and inviting for a swim. He took off the smock he had found beside his bed. The black sand was very hot, he had to run fast until he reached the water. He noticed immediately that he did not have all his strength back yet.

The Atlantic won't run away from me, he thought, and shortened his stay in the water. Satisfied with himself and still flushed with a feeling of happiness, he started on his way back.

The next two days he recovered completely. In the bungalow he found a few more books on theoretical physics, astrophysics, computer science and other interesting fields of science of the extinct high civilization of this earth.

Reading, bathing, eating and walking a little in the surroundings, the two days flew by. On the third day, at sunset, Nanino came back.

"I assume you are familiar with the age-old tradition here on Earth of drinking a bottle of wine with friends." Nanino placed a bottle of red wine on the patio table.

"Yes, I remember that, also the custom of drinking stronger."

"Yes I know you have been on this planet for much longer than you grew up here. I was able to read that in your mind before I closed off this access to you for myself."

Nanino poured two glasses, which once again sparkled vigorously in the setting sun.

"To our friendship! "To our friendship!"

"Doesn't the wine in the cup sparkle as beautifully as the ruby in your wand?" remarked Nanino, somewhat ironically, only to continue presently, "that's an art I can't do yet."

Selon no longer wondered about Nanino; he was obviously no stranger to him.

"You don't know me yet, Selon, so I'll have to tell you a little about myself before I inquisitorially question you."

"I came among humans as a baby and grew up with them, though my destiny and disposition was not that of a human," Nanino began to tell of his childhood and youth. He told of Pandae, once designed by the humans of the last high civilization, finding the opportunity to evolve and leave the biological base of intelligence. He also did not forget to mention that Pandae had realized very early on that even at this stage of evolution, there could only be further development if she created autonomous beings out of herself that could become her equal.

"She also created human clones, with the ability to live a life without biological death. Of these clones, I am the only one who grew up fully among humans and still resides on Earth. That shall suffice for now." With that, Nanino concluded his brief report.

"Now let's get to you. So you got here by accident, tunneled, transformed from another world or whatever you want to call it. What amazes me so much about this is that I immediately sensed that we are very similar, almost as similar as twins, because we clones are all also twins with very small variations. With us, after all, biological diversity no longer matters." Nanino smiled at Selon and thought, I can surely love Selon like my own twin too. "We are the pinnacle of biologically achievable harmony," Nanino continued, "we are the most biologically achievable thing in this world and the pinnacle of "Wet Evolution" as you might still derisively call it. Our youthful body is always at the physical age of 12/13, is in harmony and the mind, the intellect can develop unhindered. After this time, the human body is only evolutionarily developed into a sex machine, we are not. "

Nanino paused, looking at Selon urgently but also with love, then continued, "It seems to be the same in your world, although there are small differences there, in terms of basic physical constants and algorithms, we are still amazingly similar as biological beings."

Nanino poured the second glass of wine. In the meantime, the sun had already set and the first stars shone in the night sky, just as they had thousands of years ago.

"Now you tell me about your world, which you left involuntarily, but, I'm already pretty sure, not without purpose."

Selon began to tell of their ancient civilization and their very different life that had existed for thousands of years on his home planet. He also reported that unlike Earth, they had made no analysis in the form of laws, algorithms of their environment. Selon had only learned that on Earth. From the beginning, their development consisted of building neural networks and learning in the form of neural structures. What was probably necessary for that? A memory system that was not connected to their bodies. They called it the Navida Chronicle, which was only consciously accessible to those years their senior. But actually, as Selon noted in comparison to

the solar system here, that was certainly because they were forced into a development that could not be based on fossil fuels.

Nanino listened intently and interrupted Selon, "How is it for you here on Earth? Do you feel this Navida Chronicle is accessible to you here on Earth as well?"

"I don't. If I did, I'd have to be able to access it, though due to my young age, I couldn't yet, even on my home planet."

Nanino laughed, "Your young age of over a thousand years?"

"Yes, a thousand years is but a tiny fraction of eternity." Selon admitted with a grin, "and yet it is with us." Selon considered and became serious, "What I can do though, and it's a strange thing. I can purge my memory, my memories specifically, partially erase them directly and then I can learn more new things."

"That is indeed strange!" stated Nanino, "it can only be explained if one assumes that you still have some connection to your world."

"Yes that and also the regained ability to focus energy or create out of thin air tells me that I am still connected to my world somehow, even if incompletely, or that our two worlds are not as different as we might still assume."

"We must and will sort that out," Nanino assured her, "but not right away. Take a look around your new surroundings, I need to check a few processes and then I'll take you on a trip to the realm of immortal women."

"NO! Don't you dare! I've had enough of societies with a 100 percent female quota. Isn't that what they used to call it more than a thousand years ago?"

"Yes, I know that from the history of the previous age as well," Nanino smiled at Selon, "unlike you, I was doing very well then, well, relatively speaking."

Nanino said goodbye and disappeared into the night.

Reading, swimming, eating and drinking, that was all Selon was capable of yet, he enjoyed this being served by a servo robot.



Nanino came back and led Selon to the center of the Pandaeae on Earth, it had also been the historical starting point of the super AI Pandaeae. In a hall with server cabinets that were still from the early days and kept running by servo robots, they then stood in front of a control panel. This, too, seemed to have been originally made for humans.

"Selon, I don't know if you've lived to see it on Earth, how the global network of servers once worked. I haven't known it for long either.

It must have looked something like this at one time, though the technology in the cabinets is nothing like it was over a thousand years ago."

"No, when it was still intact, I didn't have access, and then I lived on the island, north of here. I told you that."

"On one of the islands of this archipelago, there used to be a research laboratory for the genetic perfection of man," Nanino began his rambling explanation, "at that time, of course, for the female version of man. Remnants of the male version still existed and were kept in secret until one day a theft in that gene pool was discovered.

Pandae, by the way, had her hands in it then too, not in the theft, but in the design of those few male specimens. Then with me, she made the breakthrough, the wild card."

Nanino looked at Selon and felt he had to cut the narrative short.

"The female employees of this gene lab had then come to the conclusion that there must also be a female variant, who also belonged to the aristocracy of immortals."

Nanino paused, and he still wasn't entirely sure what role Pandae had played then.

"Pandae revealed himself and the lab staff was now working with Pandae. The plan was to skip the biological development of this "real Nanina" and create the finished specimen right away. The women of this genetic lab were instructed to train the emerging female super-AI. Pandae simulated suitable environments for the women to train in, just like in a computer game. But then they got the idea that they themselves could enter such a simulated world forever. They created one and ..."

"...And what happened to it? Why did they go into this, after all, very limited computer simulation? "

"Wait, of course they were hoping to develop the female version of the eternally young faster in the simulation.

The power supply is protected three times. The servo robots can repair themselves and the facility. I even suspect Pandae has created a cloud so that they are practically immortal and can be restarted at an earlier time in the event of an accident.

Pandae had other plans by this time, though, making preparations to leave Earth."

Both of them were silent for a while. Selon didn't really feel like entering this world yet and asked Nanino directly, "What do you want there and what am I supposed to do with it?"

"I can't get the access decrypted, I have no power over this simulation. I don't know what's happening. We have to go into this simulated world ourselves. It's questions about the structure and function of such a simulation that interest me. How far does it go? Can you tell salt crystals from sugar crystals, for example? Can it be extended to the size of a universe? What are the algorithms for evolution, if there is to be one?"

Selon thought another question was important: "Are we going to get back there, too?"

"If we want it? Already?" Nanino smiled at Selon. I would like to know your opinion. And we want to make a comparison to the physics in the simulation and on Earth and on your planet. You've been studying this for some time, after all. It's a research trip that's also in the interest of our own future."

Nanino had become serious: "Selon I was there on the island and there were no more of those people. Only one last person lay dead and already barely recognizable in the upload unit. It was quite amazing to me how one could commit such a suicide. It was probably the fear of physically getting older and dying."

"We have the opportunity here in the old center of Pandae, on our island, to show up ourselves with an avatar in the simulation. Only through conversation might we get the information we want. Who talks to two camera eyes, two black holes where the light falls.

Nanino had managed, after several attempts, to get two scenes out of the simulation in a split second. He showed them to Selon.

"They're all women, aren't they? Should we get a female avatar in the simulation?"

"If you want to. But I don't think they really care, they're all on feminine oriented and they'll see us as - something like alien animals."

"We're not going to appear naked and scare them, are we?"

Nanino had to laugh, "No, I don't think that's the smartest thing either."



The selection and design of an avatar was not easy. They had quickly found the outer appearance. They oriented themselves to the harmony of a 16-year-old girl, that was also considered harmonious in human biography, at least in terms of appearance.

It became more difficult with the other senses. Taste, touch and a sense of warmth were integrated. They dispensed with a sense of smell. After lengthy discussion, they also dispensed with the receptivity of sexual stimuli. Energy production on a biochemical basis was not an issue. They had no intention of staying longer than necessary. They did not want to gain the energy from simulated biochemical digestion processes, for this they installed a stable tunnel through which they were connected at all times with the outside world, which was not accessible from the simulation.

All the preparations took several weeks, had to be tested and adjusted and improved again and again. Although Nanino had large parts of Pandae's intelligence at his disposal, it was a fascinating new territory he was entering.

Then it was time, servorobots fixed the two on a couch and placed the connections Nanino had prepared in their brains. As a precaution, they had placed probes for food intake and medication. Nanino couldn't estimate how long they would be in the simulation and he couldn't predict exactly where the tunnel would end in the simulation.

10 Anra

Nanino came to and found himself on the slope of a mountain that belonged to a bay of the sea. Beside him a young girl was rubbing her eyes.

"How are you feeling, Sela?" asked Nanino with a smirk. "Good! You are a lovely young girl," replied Selon, "don't you think Nanina that we might have preferred to look for our avatar in old women?"

"I've had that thought too - it's too late now." They both had to laugh.

They walked down the slope, which was not so easy, as there was no path to be discovered anywhere. With their light shoes it seemed to be difficult. But they soon convinced themselves that they could walk in them without difficulty. Selon still thought: must be so, we brought them with us and connected them directly to our feet like in a computer game.

Already from a distance they could see naked bathing women on the beach. The entire complex, which they had only seen incompletely in the screenshot before, was now in front of them.

"Can we be seen naked too?", Selon wanted to know at the sight of her. Nanino only nodded.

"What do you mean, Nanino..." "Nanina please, we've changed sexes - don't forget." "Yeah, I'll keep an eye out. What do you mean, did they put their super AI in that glass house?"

"No, of course not, I'm sure they just have the terminals there leading out of the simulation."

Arriving directly at the shore below, they entered a relatively large temple, made only of columns with a few stone supports. They were about to continue on to the glass house when two naked young women called and waved to them from the beach. Nanino and Selon turned back around and waited for the women to reach them.

"Hey, have we seen you guys before?" one of them called out from a distance. Nanino thought about what he could say in a flash. They weren't really that prepared for a first encounter. He had imagined that they would go straight to the boss Anra and talk about their request right away.

Nanino had no mental contact with either Selon or the two beauties, but he had a hunch and he made use of it, "Yeah sure, but that was a while ago."

The two young women were satisfied. After they had examined Selon and Nanino extensively in their avatar, one of them asked: "Don't you want to go into the water with us and play with the ball on the meadow afterwards?"

"Come on you two pretties, get your clothes off already and get in the water, we have at least an hour before the feast in the afternoon."

Selon looked at Nanino, who just shrugged and brushed off his smock. The water was pleasantly soft and didn't taste salty. You could swim here forever, Nanino thought. They dived and were dived by the two mermaids. Underwater, they could see fish and few aquatic plants. Their avatar allowed them longer dives than the two young women. They had to blend in to avoid attracting attention. Even when playing ball on the lawn at the beach afterwards, their new bodies proved to be up to all demands.

"We had a lot of fun playing with you guys here, but unfortunately we have to leave already. We have a meeting with Anra," Nanino ended the game.

"I'll see you at the feast, and we're looking forward to spending the night with you," the one still called after them.

Selon looked at Nanino and involuntarily quickened his steps. Nanino smiled to himself, "It won't come to that, or will it Selon?"

They only had to ask once. Anra seemed to be expecting them already. She stood in front of the glass house and had already watched them from afar.

"Do you like it here with us? How was the swim in the velvety water?" She asked Nanino and Selon to take a seat at a table by the pool in front of the glass house.

"Did Pandae send you, did she manage to sneak in two avatars?"

"No," laughed Nanino, "we are here out of curiosity. Will you not allow visitors?"

"Yes, we were going to, until our research was complete."

Nanino looked at Anra in amazement, "Is it them, is there 'Nanina'?"

Selon wondered if Anra knew she was talking to the former Nanina, Evolution's wildcard?

Anra became serious, "The 'Nanina' does not exist, will not exist."

"Have you stopped the research? Why? What are you doing then?"

"Too many questions at once," Anra had regained her composure and looked first at Selon and then Nanino, "Now tell me first who you are and what here might satisfy your curiosity. It is not polite to press your host with inquisitorial questions."

"Yes, of course. This here is Selon, from another solar system, and I'm Nanino, and I used to be Nanina."

Anra burst into peals of laughter, "And here you have chosen this female avatar!"

"Yes, as a courtesy, we didn't mean to startle you," Selon explained.

"Yes, well, I can understand that but your youthful outfit is no less frightening but in a pleasant way. People will want to seduce you. An old woman would have been a better avatar. We are all young and mature women here. We agreed on that once. - Wait, now I get it - you're the wildcard?"

Anra looked at Nanino with her head tilted as if she could see through the avatar.

"Yes"

"And you gave up your biological body and traded it for this female avatar?"

"No?"

It took Anra a while before she continued thoughtfully, "You're not getting out of here. If you live in this world, you live here until the end of the universe or until we run out of power."

"I know your transformation into this simulation. And from what I have seen so far...you have succeeded." Nanino did not address Anra's statement.

What if she's right? Selon looked at Nanino.



Anra stood up, "We'll talk more tomorrow. It shouldn't be hard for you to find a bed, as crusty young as you are." She smiled at them both and turned back as she walked, "For now, the feast begins."

Nanino and Selon looked at each other. They were not prepared for this. A large table, overloaded with fruits, drinks, and various foods, stood in a man-made garden setting. It looked like a portico without a roof and consisting of only three sides. The whole thing gave the

impression of a garden party in a historical setting of a long-gone cultural era of man. The women had dressed in ancient Greek costumes, stood around the table, drank and ate from the deliciously arranged dishes.

"What happens if we eat and drink here?", Selon wanted to reassure himself again, even though he actually knew. "Nothing, we let that into the inside of our avatar and there...that information leaves us into the outside of this simulation and is erased, that's how it's supposed to be."

Both felt out of place in their summer athletic attire. They tried to avoid this plaque and walked up the stairs to a small hexagonal temple up a hill. A sculpture of two girls nestled against a more mature woman stood inside.

From here they watched the goings-on below. One woman played a lyre, a second joined in with a panpipe. At the edge of the pool two women appeared as undines and looked longingly at the table. With their fish tails they could not take part in the feast.

The woman put on the panpipe and with the first notes thunder rang out. A satyr - was it the god Pan? - appeared. Where he had come from so quickly the two could not see from above. A commotion arose; the women crowded anxiously together at a pillar. The mermaids swam away.

Selon thought it was funny, and turning to Nanino he said: "You can't really believe that the woman dressed as Pan is this god. Two more satyrs appeared. Pan snatched her flute from the woman and began to play it himself. It sounded really gruesome.

Pan played and suddenly pointed at Selon and Nanino. The women were still nestled together fearfully. The two satyrs ran up the stairs to the temple in a flash.

"Guess we'll have to play along here," Nanino managed to say to Selon, and then they were there, grabbing the two to drag them downstairs. Nanino and Selon reluctantly went along. Once downstairs, they were stripped by the satyrs and two other women dressed as sylphs.

Suddenly everyone was cheerful again and clapped their hands. Nanino and Selon were dressed in an ancient Greek woman's robe and were offered a cup of delicious drink. Nanino thought as he drank: well, the sense of taste must have succeeded us.

Pan played the flute and a woman the lyre. Nanino and Selon were the center of attention until Anra freed them and led them to the terrace, where they could talk undisturbed by the others.

"Our feasts are always a bit entertaining and draw from a well of this earth's history. Did it frighten you or did you enjoy it?", Anra wanted to know, "today's game leaders asked me and I said they may include you in the game."

"It made me uneasy at first...but then, a female body like that.... is also quite beautiful" Selon answered.

"It's not just the body, it's the spirit that resides in it, and together then they exert that pull," Anra explained, continuing, "we've been able to gain some experience by now that will help us defy eternity."

"To defy?" asked Nanino in amazement.

"Yes to defy," Anra continued, "we live in a limited world here. I avoid the word simulation. We live here in a world that we have designed and continue to design ourselves. We are designing autonomous plants and will soon have animals as well."

"And humans, if the term still applies?"

"Yes and no, not humans, like you Nanino, like Selon. Humans emerged from the algorithms of an evolution we now reject from our experiences with it. We consider ourselves spiritual beings, a form of concentrated information."

"You have abandoned the original research into creating a female human who can theoretically live forever?"

"Yes, of course. I told you before that evolution in the organic realm has culminated in man. But an aristocracy of immortality needs no sexes."

"There must be a development, however, or every eternity will perish prematurely."

"Yes, for sure. We've taken a path based on creativity and the stimulus that two or more complex and autonomous systems - I'll say bodies - exert on each other."

"You live in a finite world, though, and increasing complexity is reaching its limits," Nanino interjected.

"Right, but we're expanding our boundaries and temporarily we have purposeful oblivion built in, so we won't get bored on the long road to eternity. Forgetting creates seemingly infinite combinations."

I suspected as much, thought Nanino. All three laughed, they already knew the problem, especially Selon.

"If I'm looking at this right, though, you still love each other physically, and we're something you thought you'd already overcome, some kind of seduction."

Anra groaned audibly, "We're not perfect yet, yes we are."

"We're not perfect either, perfectly female, we're just sort of living statues here, maybe only capable of one-sided platonic love - physically speaking," Nanino replied, "we're also on the path of a spiritual evolution and can quite understand it being hard to get to a higher evolution without the mutual physical attraction, in the sense of growing complexity and concentration of autonomous bodies of information."

Anra looked at both of them in turn, "What are you doing here with us?"

Nanino explained in detail the reason for their journey to the world of immortal women. He praised her courage for this adventure and the results of her efforts so far to create her own world.

Anra quite regretted that their visit should be limited in time. Nanino promised, however, that they were so interested in this development that they would certainly come again, perhaps even more perfectly than they had planned on their first visit.

Selon wished them success in creating spiritual beings similar to them and gave them a few more recommendations on how to build a harmonious spiritual hierarchy. These experiences from Valinor were also of interest to Nanino.

They stayed a few more days, if one could speak of days here. In essence, they remained unmolested - apart from a few secret kisses from the women - and could carry out their investigations. Selon examined the physics of this world to what extent it was truly autonomous and what constants it was built upon. Nanino got to the bottom of the simulation. What was the micro-scale resolution, how big were the space-time cells really. What algorithms were used to render this world as needed. Were all the constants of nature really constant or were they Fourier series in space and time.

Anra gained them access to their development department, which was built high on a mountain in the style of a monumental building.

"If I'm not mistaken, that was the historic Capitol in America." Selon had studied the history and art history of Earth for a long time. Too long, in his own opinion.

"Richtig," Anra confirmed, "here we had actually found another simulation from an ancient computer game that we converted for our purposes."

Anra regretted that Nanino and Selon wanted to leave her, it was in her power not to let them go. But in the end she let it happen, they were not perfect for her world after all.

"Uh, lucky us," Selon gave a sigh of relief when they were back in their bodies outside the simulation.

11 The last war

The Archaics pushed further north. The women's civilization fell. Only splinter groups of Wildcats still lived in hard-to-reach mountainous regions. Dagan was flooded with fled women and now had direct contact with the Archaics in the south. There were no clans left in the east that had not converted to the Achaics in their religion. Did the religion of Archaos promise the unrestricted rule of man again after all? Did the pendulum swing back in the old direction.

A king and a prince ruled in Dagan, the descendants of King Rona were already in the third generation.

The northeast of the Iberian Peninsula was defended for a number of years by the Bay's elite and auxiliaries from Dagan. But eventually it had to be abandoned. Remnants of this society reached Dagan and the island that was once Britain.

Dagan had benefited from the Bay's workshops in the beginning. There were even vehicles that could run on wood gas generators and the first rifled barrels for small arms in small numbers.

The laboriously negotiated ceasefire agreements often lasted only a few years. Dagan did not come to rest. The constant state of war had shattered the whole society. If they could not succeed in ousting the Archaics from Central Europe, they would probably have to consider their society a failure as well.

Dagan had made contact with the Society of Sky Children, as they still called themselves. They had also begun to settle the great island of Britain. There were no major differences between them and the Dagan settlers though their cultures were not compatible. The Celestials had few male members, who also lived to be at least twice as old as the females. It was a female society and not a heterogeneous one like Dagan.

The Grand Bay, now in its fifth generation of Archaic rule, was building a fleet to land on the island.

Under the leadership of Dagan, a final contingent was assembled. A final battle, was to stop and destroy the invading armies of Archaos.

Nanino and Selon met every evening on the terrace of Selon's bungalow. They drank a glass of wine and exchanged ideas about the research, investigations and research on the evolution of humans and the underlying laws of this world. Were they now that one, real, primary world or at least one of the first simulations? Selon was concerned with the tunnel that could exist between worlds.

"Tell me, please," Selon suddenly began an entirely different topic, "This religion of Archaos, it's spreading, and from the looks of it, it's going to defeat and destroy all other societies. I've been looking at reports from the spies. I know that you have also inaugurated a new form of society, the Sky Children. Do you intend to support at least them, your descendants, and also the descendants of your childhood friends Rona and Sika in their fight against the Archaic? Who is this Archaos that he could form such a vital society?"

Nanino was silent, looking up at the starlit night sky.

"After all, I'm not as connected to people as you are," Selon continued, "I still dream of the world I once came from. How is it for you, can't you get involved?"

Nanino was still silent, looking up at the stars.

"Sure I had my problems with women's society too, but this archaic religion..."

"...End this world's experiment." Nanino looked at Selon seriously and continued, "I don't know how Archaos came to this world. I had already believed that Pandae created an adversary to speed up her own development. However, I am not sure about that. What can be found in the archives about it cannot verify that hypothesis."

"Surely this world is stable, and will surely have that stability for several million years to come," Selon countered, "shouldn't we prevent this regression into a dark age?"

"No, that's not our purpose. We are not playing God. We are not interested in the flourishing of this world. We are only observers, being aristocrats of immortality. Just as I was a human being - and I was a human being when I started my life - with the lower creatures on this planet, so is our relationship with humans. What struggles ants had among themselves and with their natural enemies, that did not touch us; we belonged to a different class of living beings."

"Wasn't there once an era among humans when animal welfare ranked higher than child welfare?" retorted Selon sarcastically.

"Yes, and that was sick and degenerative."

"One more thing Nanino. I always wondered how I tunneled to your world as a body of flesh, blood, and bone. Now I know."

Selon was silent and Nanino looked at him with interest.

"I didn't travel through time and space as this watery something. It was only my information complex. On Earth, I was reassembled from the material that made life possible here. It wasn't quite perfect, you know, your world is slightly different, yet I didn't realize it until late. And now, all that defined me in my world, I have regained here as well."

Nanino smiled and pointed to the starry sky, "Can you see that nebulous speck there in the sky? It's a large comet that has already reached the outer reaches of the solar system."

Selon recognized him and they both looked at each other in silence for a long time.

12 Farewell

"I have here a very beautiful ruby from our nano workshops. Show me how you make it glow."

Selon smiled, "That is a secret of our world. But you are my friend..."

Nanino laughed. "And real friends share their secrets too...when it's appropriate."

"Yes, I'll show you, and I'll also try to explain how and why it might work according to my hypothesis."

Selon took the gemstone in his hands. "The stone can radiate heat and also infrared light when heated internally. To do this, the gons of the probability of the electrons must be changed. These gons are pure fields of probabilities for transitions in a quantized space-time.

But here you don't want to heat it up, you don't want to start a fire, you want it to glow and you can only do that when the electrons fall from a higher to a lower energy level."

Selon held the stone aloft and concentrated, and after a few moments it actually began to glow."

"How many thousands of years did it take for your civilization to be able to do that?" wanted Nanino to know.

"After all, your development took only a few centuries to create a super AI. You owe that to the industrial revolution and the fossil energy accumulated by Earth. We didn't have that abbreviated path, or we skipped it and went straight to mastering the elemental energy impulses via the concentration of information."

Selon looked directly at Nanino, "Become the master of chance and you rule the universe!"

"I know it, you don't want to stay with me," Nanino stated sadly.

"Yes, Nanino, I want to go back and take with me the experience I have gained in this universe. Our worlds differ not in their principles for energy impulses but only ... how shall I put it, in an extremely slightly different constellation of natural constants. Our universes are embedded in an ocean of unfocused and chaotically behaving information impulses. Through this ocean I will go back across a bridge of directed information."

They both sat on the terrace in front of Selon's bungalow again and looked at the stars. The large comet was as bright as the full moon, its tail outshining the night sky.

"It's about time, Selon, I'm going to miss you."

"Yes, I agree."

"Selon, I promise you one more thing: just as you visited us, I will visit you once, and willingly."

They both hugged each other for a long time, their mutual decoding of each other's thoughts still turned off.

The next few days passed quickly. Nanino had already prepared a few things. They crossed over to the former America. From there they launched into space and entered the Hollow World for Nanino's future stay in interstellar space.

Selon entered the bridge over the sea of information. Nanino knew he would see him again.

Nanino left the solar system. He would create a new avatar for himself, similar to the one Alan had developed. What universe he lived in, he would find out, and he would then enter the primordial sea of information. He was Nanino and also Pandeae, just like Beo and Alan.



13 Epilogue

Satan - The fallen angel

We three boys grew up in a rural environment. Hills and dense forests surrounded the village at a greater distance. Close to the village were pastures for the animals and fenced fields where what man and animal needed to live grew. They were Arno, the son of the village blacksmith, who sometimes had to help out at the anvil, but had not the slightest desire to do so and would rather have ridden into adventures as a knight in shining armor. Nico, the son of the landlord of the "Dorfkrug", he dreamed of living in a larger settlement and running a hostel for strangers there. The third was me, Suno, the son of the village schoolmaster. My father taught the children some reading, writing and arithmetic during the less busy times. Every family in the village also had meadows, fields, woods and animals. We boys and our siblings usually had to look after the animals.

The summer was glorious that year and the elders of the village claimed that they had only experienced such a summer in their childhood. We boys tried to take every opportunity to make ourselves invisible from the village. We had a place on the side of a hill, surrounded by shady old trees and bushes, including a few apple trees. This was our meeting place. Here we could smoke undisturbed and plan further adventures. We were particularly taken with an old castle ruin perched on a steep rock.



In the village it was said that the devil lived there, or at least that it was the hole to hell. Some older women had seen him riding through the ruins at night on a fiery horse, so they said. The horror stories about the devil, how he could plague poor people, we had heard since our early childhood. Others said you could not even approach the mountain without going mad. In the village we had a poor wretch who claimed to have been at the big gate that led into the mountain below the castle and that huge insects had attacked him there. No one really took him seriously, because he also told other strange stories, all about how he had fought with the devil. Even though no one wanted to believe this village idiot, no one from the village had dared to even go to the foot of the castle rock. Even the goats were kept away from it, although there were supposed to be lush pastures there.



One day a boy about our age sauntered up to us. He spoke to us in a friendly manner and immediately captivated us. We were paralyzed. We are always wary of strangers, we have learned that. We usually don't make contact and run away, to the village, should we encounter a strange stranger out there, man or woman.

But this was a boy just like us, only

better dressed. He looked like a prince without a crown or a sword.

In our village no one needed to carry a weapon, we all knew each other and strangers never strayed to us. There was probably a way to our huts, but not out again. His figure had something heavenly about it and the charisma of his person fascinated us. He spoke with an engaging voice, as if he had chatted with us many times before. He was so handsome and kind that we were all eager to make him our friend. Nico wanted to offer him his tobacco pipe as a gesture of friendship. But he only remembered that we had forgotten the steel and flint when he handed the stranger his pipe.

"Nico, fire is not my problem, smoking is. Give me your tobacco pipes."

Arno and Nico gave him his tobacco pipes, I pinched. We couldn't see exactly how he did it. He blew and the embers lit up, stronger than we would have been able to do ourselves. Arno and Nico convinced themselves they were burning well. I still felt a shiver run down my spine. The stranger turned to me, smiled at me and chatted away cheerfully. All the while, he consistently called us by our names. He told of travels that sounded incredible and fantastic. We couldn't help but just listen to him. Our fear of strangers vanished like snow in the spring sun. If at first we might have thought of running away, now we were glad he stayed with us. And we were thrilled to have gained this boy as a friend.

I asked, "Where did you learn to make fire?"

"Learned? I don't need to learn that, I can do that and a few other things."

"Can you show us some other things?", Arno wanted to know.

"Yes, perhaps, if you are not afraid and will not run away."

"No, we won't do that!" assured Nico.

The stranger smiles at us, and a feeling of happiness runs through us again and again to have this boy as a friend.

"But you must promise me that you will not breathe a word of our meeting to anyone in your village. If you blab about us, you will never see me again." At his last words an unspeakable feeling of sadness came over us. We promised him that we would not say a word about our meeting to anyone else, even if we were tortured and threatened with the stake.

He smiled at us again in his winning way and said that he would help us a little to keep our promise. He also told us that we would hear strange things when we went back to the village. We should not take that seriously. At the end he told us that he was also pleased to have us as friends. This triggered another wave of happiness in us, which we had never experienced before in our lives.

"I have another job to do and I have to go now. But we can meet again tomorrow and I'll tell you something there that you might like."

We didn't want him to leave us. Feverishly we thought about how we could smuggle him into the village unseen and then hide him.

He smiled at us with his beaming face, "You guys are really sweet!" Then he thought for a while and said, "I'll give you a talisman. Of course, you must not show it to anyone. Wear it on your body where no one but you can see it."

He gave us something that looked like a flattened egg. We had to say our name and with the repetition of our name he said: "..., this is your talisman."

He put it in each of our hands and smiled at us in his winning way.

"Oh, if you're alone at night, really alone, you can try holding it to your ear."

We stood there with our mouths open, fearing that we wouldn't be able to remember all this. The strange stranger walked back the way he had come. After a few steps he stopped, turned around once more and called out to us, "It's a talisman!"

We were still standing there speechless when he had long since disappeared into the woods.

The sun was already setting when we reported somewhat recovered from our adventure in the village. The people were very excited and almost the whole village was gathered in the village pub. Some peasants, while working in their fields, had seen quite clearly a golden disc fall from the sky. It would have been so bright that one had to hold one's hand in front of one's eyes. The Aman was informed and thought the village had gone completely mad. He would have to write a report to the Chief Saman.

One lumberjack who said he had been nearby even reported that an angel had come out of the window. A real angel with wings.

The Aman suspected a case of heresy here and took it upon himself to investigate the matter further.

Our hearts were full and the temptation to talk about our adventure with the strange boy was very strong. But the very attempt to tell something about it triggered a blockade in us and made us immediately become mute.

After we got the usual reproaches from our parents, why we came home so late and neglected the work duties, we tried to catch up on some things very quickly, like fetching water, feeding the animals, and then gobbling down supper. We all couldn't wait to be alone in bed. But that was not so easy, the siblings had to fall asleep first.

I remember it like it was just yesterday. My heart was pounding and couldn't calm down, my head was hot as if in a fever, and I was so excited I didn't think I would be able to sleep that night. Then it was time. I pressed my talisman to my ear and laid my head on it as well. At first nothing happened, but then music began to play that was so incredibly beautiful that it could only come from heaven. It transported me to a beautiful landscape and intertwined with my dreams. The next morning found me well rested and refreshed. I didn't want to get up, so beautiful had been the dream I was still indulging in.

The next day, the village had still not calmed down. Everyone had rushed to the village prayer room for morning prayers. The Aman preached sharply that the devil had once again tempted the village and that they should all purify themselves. If they did not, the devil would inevitably gain power over them. And he announced that he would accuse all those of heresy who would continue to spread this devilish stuff. The purification could take place in offerings, money or, because many had hardly any, also in kind.

We boys had a lot to do and with special zeal we helped all the domestic chores in order to get time off for the afternoon.

My father, the village schoolman, had advised everyone, especially the children, not to leave the village. They even thought about a night watch. But in the afternoon most of them had calmed down again, so that we boys could set off unnoticed to our hiding place. On the way, we exchanged stories about the talisman. Each of us had heard wonderful music and had fallen into a paradisiacal dream that made it very difficult to get up in the morning.

Our hearts immediately beat faster when we arrived at the hideout. We sensed that the mysterious stranger would appear instantly, which he did. He greeted us by name while placing his hand on everyone's shoulder. We had fallen for his charisma again and felt like giants, like heroes and dragon slayers in his company.



Arno took heart and asked, "You know our names, but we don't know where you're from or what you call yourself."

He smiled at us, "I'll show you something and then I'll answer who I am."

We stretched out comfortably in the grass and waited to see what he would show us. The talisman was, after all, something that could only be explained by magic. But our fear of magic



and witchcraft was more than compensated for by our youthful curiosity and the enchanting way the stranger spoke to us and the high feelings he aroused in us.

He sat down on a tree stump opposite us and a blue light flared up, brighter than the sunshine. What we saw afterwards left us speechless.

Great iron birds flew between great spheres through the sky and towards the spheres and landed there. Some were just rocky landscapes with no green stalks for the goats, others were lush green and huge waterfalls tumbled from great heights. Animals as big as goat pens grazed in the lush pastures and they looked like giant fleas.

For a while we couldn't say a word, then Nico asked, "Is that where you come from in the sky, and is that where it looks like?"

"Yes"

"Are you an angel?"

"Yes, in your eyes I am an angel."

Somehow we had already guessed that our strange friend could only be an angel, who according to the rumors had come to us in the golden disc.

I wanted to know more, but before I could speak my question, he looked at me and said: "These iron birds do not belong to the angels, they travel in a completely different way, you would only discover huge pieces of rock moving among the stars. These iron birds belong to dreams of such creatures as you are, they also called themselves humans and they believed they would one day become angels themselves and continue their lives in heaven as they had done on their celestial sphere. But this species of a lot of water, coal and a few minerals, to which you also belong. They're very rare and they always can't grasp who they really are, so they regularly destroy themselves then when they have such dreams as I showed you."

What we really understood at that time, I don't really know anymore. We were overwhelmed by what we saw and could hardly comprehend that it should look like this in heaven.

"Arno, you have one more question burning on your heart and today I'll answer it too. Call me Satan. And, Nico, I am as old as you are, at least as far as my outward appearance is concerned."

At the word Satan, all three of us involuntarily flinched. Satan had always been a companion of the devil, an evil angel.

That is not quite true," Satan answered our fears, "it is only advantageous for your Amane to divide heaven into good and evil angels. This is an excellent way to rule among you. In heaven there is neither good nor evil, that is only an invention of your kind. For you I am an angel banished to earth."

He looked at us with a smile and chatted on in his frank and winning language.

"Angels are not interested in such creatures of water and coal. To angels you are only as much as ants are to you."

We sat there with our mouths open, unable to say a word, so fascinated were we by Satan.

"It's different for me. I showed you pictures of an extinct water-carbon species. I was abandoned there as a small child and grew up with children like you. My name was Nanina then. Only I didn't grow up like that. Later I found my comrades who were my age, and we were youthful angels for a time far beyond your imagination."

Satan paused and as if hypnotized we continued to look at his lips. Then he said something probably more to himself.

"Your species will suffer a different fate than the species of five billion years ago. You don't have any of the carbon deposits and if you ever get to the point of harnessing the energy of the stars....I think I have something else to do today and will leave now."

We looked sad and in our thoughts we almost begged Satan to come back tomorrow.

He had heard our mental plea and said with a winning smile, "Well, meet me at the Devil's Hole tomorrow for a bath. Wish for some fruit that we can eat there after bathing."

The Devil's Hole, we had mentioned it in our minds. No children bathed there, adults were never seen in the area. The children bathed in the village pond, a shallow and muddy pool. The

Devil's Hole was a dangerous place with deep water, and if you strayed into it, you might encounter a ghost rising from the graves thought to be there or from the water. We older boys had dared to see this eerie place from a nearby hill at midday, only to quickly disappear again.

"You need not fear," Satan reassured us, "we will meet in the afternoon when the sun is still high."

That night we had another wonderful experience. I lay down with one ear on my talisman, listening to the wonderful music, thinking for myself if the others could also hear the same music. Involuntarily, I had said "Arno" and the music turned down, then I heard Arno's voice saying, "Suno, did you call me?" Spontaneously I said, "No, but I must have said your name."

We were speechless for a while until we realized that we could talk to each other through the talisman. We made a date and each went out of the house so no one else could hear us. We also included Nico. So the three of us talked and we were so excited and also a little scared about the talisman. How long we had talked so excitedly, we no longer knew. But I slept for a long time that morning until my father threw me out of bed with the words, "You lazy dog, get up at last and do your work!"

After lunch we disappeared from our families and met in our hideout. Now we could also communicate about the talisman during the day, which we used abundantly. And there was something else we found out: When other people were around and could have heard, the talisman remained silent.

Together we approached the Devil's Hole. Satan we saw from afar, elegantly swimming and diving in the water. We were no longer afraid when we saw him, undressed and slid down the sandy slope. The water was warm at the surface, but further down it grew colder. We swam and dove to compete with Satan, but always lost out, he was far better than we were.



Exhausted, we worked our way back up the slope. Once at the top, a large bat or whatever it was flew to us and brought us a small table of delicious fruit, some of which we had never seen before. We were overwhelmed by the taste and fruity sweetness. But that was not all. On the little golden table were four more goblets of a very unknown kind. They sparkled and glittered in the sunshine. The wine we drank from them was like nothing we had ever drunk or would ever drink in our lives. It put us into an ecstasy, as if we were floating back and forth between the

different planets in heaven like Satan. We felt so happy and in love with Satan that we would have done anything for him just to be with him all the time in these heavenly worlds.

For the next few days we did not see Satan, although we regularly talked about our talisman among ourselves when we knew we were unobserved. We found our daily chores, such as fetching water and working in the fields, dull and boring. We longed for him so much that we showed no interest in the other children. What they were doing seemed trivial and childish to us. We would have liked to hear more about him, and we were eager to hear about those magical, faraway worlds in the sky.

There was some commotion in the village. The Aman had informed the Highaman in the market town and had come to the conclusion that heresy should be fought in our village. It could only have been the devil bewitching the village. Too many people had noticed a golden disc in the sky and one woodcutter had even seen an angel come out. Our village was in an uproar and people were eagerly expecting the angel to show up in the village too and perform miracles. Our Aman was at a loss, they no longer listened to him and his weekly prayers, which only revolved around the devil and his machinations in this village.

We learned that the woodcutter, whose name was Teno, had confessed in the embarrassing interrogation that he was possessed by the devil and that the devil had hired him to spread the rumor about the angel.

The trial was to be in three days and we were already full of expectations as to how he would be executed. His wife could be heard crying in their hut and their two girls no longer dared to go to the village.

Heretics and witches were usually tied to a pile of wood and then burned. Other punishments included stoning, usually for wives who had been unfaithful, and staking in wars, and many other gruesome deaths. We had heard all these punishments in the weekly sermons, to which we older children also had to go regularly.

We made an appointment through our talisman and went to our hiding place where we had first met Satan. But he still did not appear. Then the time came, when once again all three of us were secretly talking about our talisman we suddenly heard his voice: "Come to Devil's Gulch

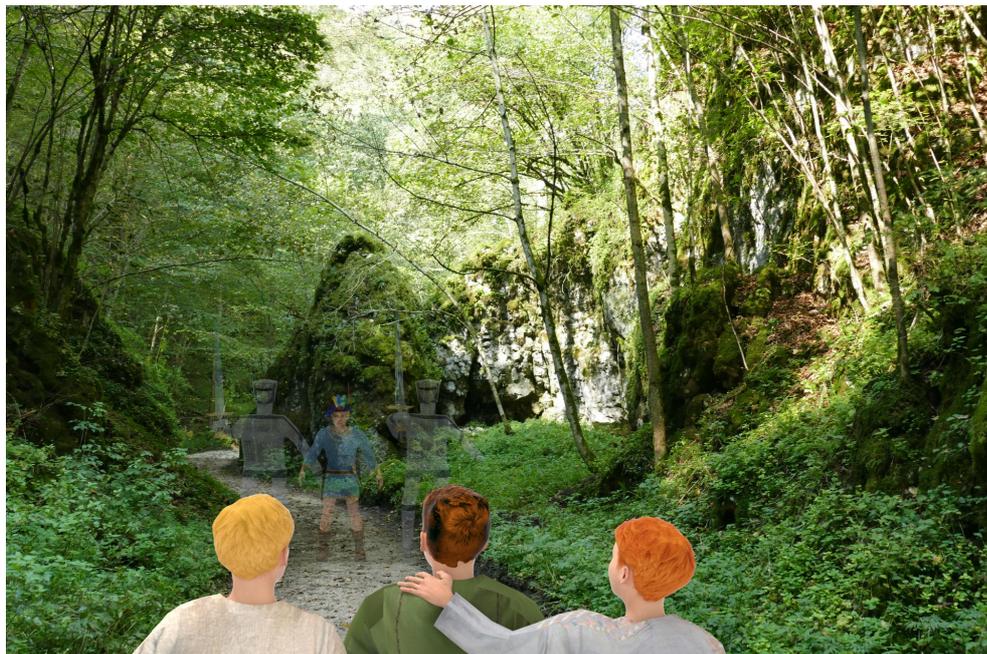
this afternoon, two hours before sunset, I will be there too."

Our hearts beat faster, finally we could meet him again. What would he show us this time, what interesting things would he tell us. Could his bat bring us delicious fruit? We were in such a frenzy that it did not occur to us that we were actually heretics



too. But we didn't care and instinctively we did the right thing, of course Satan helped us somehow: we didn't tell anyone about our secret!

What irritated us a bit at first was the meeting point in the Devil's Gorge. This was an ancient path, but it was not yet overgrown, although no one walked or drove on it, and it led in several twists and turns directly to the old castle ruins, from which it was claimed that the gate to hell could be found there. The opportunity to meet Satan there made us forget everything.



When we arrived running and out of breath, Satan was already waiting for us. He was very nobly dressed and accompanied by two knights in their armor.

"I'll be showing up in the village tomorrow to watch the heresy trial. So that you will not be surprised at my

appearance, I will meet with you today."

Satan paused and looked at us in turn, smiling.

"Yes, I am a prince tomorrow, and my name is Nanino, Prince of Arcasia. And yes, you saw me for the first time in the village. I am passing through on my way to my castle in your land. Now you are disappointed that I will not again tell you tales and adventures from the far reaches of the sky."

We actually looked a little disappointed, but the prospect of seeing him again tomorrow reconciled us on the spot.

Satan was already turning around and about to make his way to the castle ruins. "There's something else I can show you that you've been wanting to know for a long time. You're wondering if I can make myself invisible. Well, I can avoid being seen, but becoming completely invisible is something no angel can do either. Ghost stories may be interesting to you, but anyone who claims to have seen a ghost is most definitely a liar. See for yourselves!" Satan disappeared before our eyes, as did his knights.

That night we could hardly sleep. We had not seen many witch burnings and stonings. Very early in the morning we met at the village meeting hall. There were not many villagers present for the trial. The verdict was already set, after all, since Teno had confessed in the embarrassing interrogation to being in league with the devil. It was not until the burning at the stake that all the people, including us children, were present. We knew that the people threw stones at the heretic and that he was usually already dead before the fire really burned. He was only burned so that his soul would not go to the heavenly paradise, but directly to hell.

The trial had already begun when Satan and his knights appeared on horseback. This got the villagers in an uproar and everyone flocked to the meeting room. The knights stood next to the door and their martial appearance made people keep their distance. We tried to look through the door and for us they made an exception, they let the three of us up to the door. Obviously Satan had instructed the knights to do this.

The highman, the jury, and the executioner were astonished.

"High sir, who are you, you are not allowed in here! Leave this court at once."

Satan answered, and he knew that his guard at the door demanded the necessary respect, "I am the Prince Nanino of Arcasia, and I am passing through. Then I heard that a sentence was about to be pronounced here, and that the delinquent had no counsel."

"The defendant has confessed and counsel is not required."

Satan grinned at the Highman, "What did he confess to?"

"He claimed that a golden disc had fallen from heaven and from it had come an angel. After an embarrassing interrogation, he then confessed that the devil had hired him to spread this around the village."



Satan answered with his irresistible charm and youthful voice, "So he told the truth, for I too have seen this disc, and many others besides," he looked around at those present who had also claimed the same thing days ago, but now denied it all, "was it not perhaps the devil himself, or his helpers, who led the woodcutter to deny the truth?"

The Aman of the village, an Aman from the market town, the High Aman and the two torturers were terrified.

After a moment's pause, the highman composed himself: "What do you presume to do? Did the devil himself send you to commit this blasphemy? We will charge you as well if you do not immediately retract your statement!"

Satan laughed. "It does make me wonder a bit what is taking place here, when most of you will be dead in three days. Maybe a few girls and women will be left to be enslaved and dragged away. The village will be no more, it will be burned to the ground."

A murmur went round the room.

"This is outrageous what you are spreading."

"It is simply the truth. Let's drop it and finish the sentence now."

Satan had everyone in the room in a kind of speechlessness and calmly he continued, "In my country we have learned to expose and recognize the servants of the devil. I will show you who are the devil's helpers who have led the woodcutter to deny the truth. Look at them, the torturers, are they not the devil's helpers?"

We could only look through the door, but we could see quite clearly that the torturers suddenly took on a hideous appearance and looked very much like the devil himself, as he had been described to us.

A horror arose in the room and everyone tried to leave in panic. Satan's knights were now standing in the doorway, not letting anyone out.



Satan spoke in a voice that no one could immediately forget: "The sentence I pronounce, as the aristocrat with the judicial sovereignty vested in me: the accused is free and the accusers are sentenced to a restitution of 100 pieces of silver."

The knights released the door and people poured out.

The torturers were seen no more. The Aman hurried that they quickly reached the market town, in order to send a pack of coppers from there to the village.

We stood with Satan still outside the meeting room, unable to process what we had seen. He looked at us and smiled, "I am your friend and I expect to see you tomorrow at the old ruined castle when I am also your friend. You will climb the mountain effortlessly, I will mark the safe path."

Indecisive we stood there, should we go to the castle ruin, from which a direct way leads to hell?

Satan answered our thoughts: "Yes, we will meet there and you will see that it is a very interesting place. You need not be afraid. What is told about the mountain are only ...well, I will show you." Then he rode off with his knights, and we guessed where he would ride.

When we arrived home, we were immediately questioned as to what else we had spoken to this strange prince. Our parents were so distressed as they did not know what to believe now. Though some had also seen this golden glittering disc falling from the sky, but when the Aman branded it as blasphemy, no one wanted to have seen it anymore.

Since we remained steadfastly silent, all three of us were grounded for the next few days.

We took every opportunity to talk about the talisman. We had almost forgotten it but Nico brought back the memory: Satan had said in passing that the village will soon no longer exist. This worried us and we feverishly thought about how we could escape from our house arrest. We wanted to know more about what Satan was talking about. Through the talisman we arranged to make our escape an hour after midnight. But then we fell asleep very soundly, as usual, and would certainly have slept through it, had not our talisman made a faint voice heard, which woke us up at once. Hastily we dressed and the escape from the parental home succeeded. We had arranged to meet there, where Satan first appeared to us with his knights, in the Devil's Gorge.



It was pitch dark, no moonlight and lots of clouds, so only a few stars could be seen now and then. We held hands and could hardly walk for fear. We couldn't see the path, only at a bright alley above our heads could we see something of the sky. There were no trees and that's where the path had to be. We walked the rest of the night along the many twists and turns of Devil's Gulch and by dawn the path through the forest was over and we could see Castle Hill ahead of us. There was indeed something devilish about it and a shiver ran down our spines.

The path went on and then with the rising of the sun we stood in front of the castle hill. We were no longer afraid and we felt that Satan was not far from us.



Late in the morning we reached the rock. Satan stood on a wall and gave us signs where we could climb the mountain. He beckoned us and in our talisman we heard his voice. He gave us precise instructions which way we could climb and also made us aware of possible dangers.

Satan greeted and as almost always he stunned us. "You are the first people in the castle. Do you like it?"

Arno spoke out what we were all thinking at that moment, "Who built it?"

"I built it, and as you know, it is my fall from grace to have come to you humans." Satan smiled and I don't remember ever seeing him laugh, then he added, "That's why from a distance she only looks like a ruined castle. I built it as a ruin, and for my purposes it is sufficient."

The ruined castle had two towers that looked like they were still whole. Everything else seemed to be broken.

"Yes, the towers are usable and you will be entering them today," he answered our thoughts. He showed us around briefly, then we sat down on a stone bench by a window that was still in fairly good condition.

"Didn't you wonder why I had you come up here?" Somehow we had, but the possibility of being with Satan again had put us in such a mood of happiness that everything else seemed insignificant. What would he show us about alien worlds? What rare fruits would we get? What feats could we marvel at?

But now I wanted to know, so I asked Satan directly, "Are you omniscient and omnipotent like a god?"

Satan just smiled.

"Well, to you I am an angel and I command a thousand times more eyes and ears than you and know more than you can imagine. To be omniscient, I would have to have a thousand times a thousand more eyes and ears to possess a fraction of omniscience. I can also do a thousand times more things than you, but I am not omnipotent. I am not a god, I belong to the aristocracy of immortals, that may be like a god to you. Even if you cannot understand it."

Satan looked at Nico, "You would like to know if I know the future. Well, I know many possibilities for the future, some will be certain, some may be and some very rarely.

This ruined castle has served me for more than a thousand years here on your planet. This time I have watched you humans and chosen you three to become my friends."

At that time we did not ask ourselves why we were chosen. It was only later that we understood what he meant when he said, "I chose you because I like you, you are of an age that makes you curious about the world, and you have not yet succumbed to the urge to preserve your species. You are also more intelligent than your peers, which is not very common.

Satan smiled at Nico, "I have not always been on this ruined castle, but I have always known what was happening on your planet."

And turning to me: "The superstition in this region already has a true reason, what my helpers do has its origin in this mountain, but I will not show it to you. If I should ever abandon it and give it up, your descendants will wonder what this structure once served for and they will attribute it to the devil, a god or higher beings from outer space. For what they will find are only small passages and buried cavities. Today, however, the mountain is still alive."

We could only marvel and sometimes doubted our sanity, but Satan always left us in an ecstasy and euphoric mood, so that we were more ready to believe in some fantastic dream we were living through.

Arno had grown impatient, "Satan, can you show us any more pictures of the people who thought they were going to become angels and fly through the sky in great iron birds?"

This time Satan did not smile, "No, for those were only dreams that could never come true. It was only to warn you that such beings as they were could not live very long on their planet.

In all beings of water and carbon, I simply call them all humans I have already seen, the same rules apply when they evolve from the animal kingdom to a society. They are afraid of nature, of hunger, of strangers, of predators, even of neighbors, and therefore they always try to get safety, by fire, by houses, by weapons.

They are greedy, and try to have more and be better than their neighbors, even if they have to rob and enslave their fellow man to do it. They believe that this will give them security. This is how kingdoms, dictatorships and so-called dominions of the people are created.

And what else distinguishes people from animals is their laziness. They are too lazy to gather food all day, they are too lazy to hunt animals laboriously and therefore they keep animals in herds and cultivate fields with plant food. They want to transport large amounts of food, wood and stones more easily, so they invent the wagon with wheels. They are too lazy to carry everything themselves with their hands.

Greed, fear and laziness are mutually dependent and I don't know of any people in other parts of the sky who have otherwise managed to form a society that doesn't call itself the pinnacle of water-carbon evolution.

Satan looked at us, and knew we still couldn't do anything with water and carbon. He laughed and said, "Look at yourselves! When you hurt yourselves, red-colored water flows out of you, and when you see the human remains on the pyre, they are black like the coal the blacksmith buys from the charcoal burner. These are the most important of your ingredients.

You are special, you humans here on this planet will not be able to have great energies that are made of carbon and hydrogen. You will not be able to build such big iron birds. You can take a different path of your evolution and that is interesting to me, that is why I committed this fall and came to you on this planet. Pandaeae didn't take too kindly to it, angels don't associate with humans."

"Who is Pandaeae?", I wanted to know, "is it the name of the god you are an angel of?"

"Pandaeae a god, yes, you could put it that way. I am I, Satan, but also a part of Pandaeae."

Satan, I believed, had gone into himself and was silent for a moment, but then his face brightened in his usual way, "You will be hungry, and in that tower there beside the entrance and the ruined portico I have a snack for you."

We ran after Satan and before he got to the door, it opened all by itself. Bright light flooded out into the open. We held our hands over our eyes, so it blinded us for the first moment.



"You're getting used to it fast," Satan explained.

Inside the tower was a bench and in front of it an oval table. We had not seen such a shape of a table before.

Satan asked us to take a seat and went to a shaft. He looked in and soon a wooden board with ham, cheese, fruit and bread floated up. And what delighted us especially: there was a chalice with this wonderful red drink.

Satan handed out one of these boards to each of us and we wanted to start eating right away, but Satan called out to us, "Hold on, first let's drink to our friendship."

We raised our cups and drank to Satan.

"So now you can satisfy your hunger."

We felt overjoyed, as if we were already in paradise with Satan. Everything tasted delicious, although Satan assured us that it only looked like cheese or ham and that he had only made it that way so that we would not have to eat anything unfamiliar to which we had a natural aversion.

Most delicious of all was the drink, which brought us to the euphoria we longed for. Only now did I notice something like a staircase that led upwards in a circle and was made of very thin iron rods.



"That one goes up one floor, there's a room where I can show you some pictures from distant worlds again tomorrow" Satan answered my thoughtful question, "but now I'll show you the room where you'll sleep this night."

By now it was beginning to get dark. Satan led us into the other tower. It was very bright there too and I reflected that even with a hundred candles you probably couldn't get it that bright. He explained to us how this little rain shower worked, which he called a shower, and the privy, or whatever else he called it, where we had to sit until we were cleaned there too. Also for brushing our teeth he had a brush that all we had to do was hold it up to our teeth in our mouths and it would clean our teeth all by itself. From this room there was also a staircase to the upper floor, where there were three beds and three chairs.

"This is your sleeping room. After the evening cleaning, you will go to these beds and when you are ready to sleep, I will come again to wish you a good night.

Take off your clothes, I'll take them with me, and tomorrow they'll be fresh and clean again."

Satan disappeared with our clothes and we looked around exhilarated. Still in this wonderfully euphoric mood, Arno was the first to take a shower.

"The water is warm and fragrant!" he exclaimed. We followed him and began a completely new cleansing ritual, then lay blissfully in our beds. The light very slowly dimmed, taking on a slightly bluish cast, and Satan appeared. He wished us a good night, showed us pictures on the ceiling of the room and played some heavenly music. We didn't notice him disappear again. The pictures were fantastic and I was overwhelmed.

Now after the many years of meeting Satan, it seems to me that Satan knew some of our fantasies and showed them in overwhelming images. At some point we fell asleep and at some point we woke up. Or were we awakened by the music and the play of colors in our bedroom?

Nico said, "Do we have to stand under the little rain again, wash thoroughly and clean our teeth?"

"I think Satan said something like that," Arno replied. I nodded in agreement.

If at all, we went swimming in the summer and washed our feet in the village pond in the evening. In winter there was a wooden tub with warm water once a week, where we were washed by our mother.

Our clothes were in the washroom, clean and smelling of some flowers. We stepped outside and walked to the kitchen tower. There Satan was waiting for us and everyone got a rich breakfast, a soup and a fried egg with wonderful yellow bread. Satan didn't have the potion for us today but it wasn't necessary, we were still in that euphoric happy mood.

When I remember this today as an old man, we didn't even think about our parents back then, who might have wondered where we had stayed out. It did happen that we were not at home overnight, but in those cases the parents knew where we slept.

Satan led us out into the courtyard to show us once again one of his wonders. Surely he had picked up our thoughts and noticed our greed for it, which made us forget everything else.

One question kept me going, "If you are an angel of the god Pandeae, who is our god that we pray to? Surely the Amane proclaim the words he has spoken."

Satan became thoughtful, or so it seemed to me.

Then Satan spoke without looking directly at us: "In all these human societies, which I have already seen in the farthest worlds, there is the belief in one God who is all-knowing and all-powerful. And in every belief there are angels or other subordinate gods as the helpers of this one God. That's understandable, since people always need explanations for the things and events they can't comprehend."

I contradicted him, "We're getting better at understanding you, even if it was hard for us at first."

Satan smiled at us again in his winning way, "You are like the spirit you comprehend, not me. It is I who try to bring to your minds what you can comprehend."

Nico went on to ask, "Are there always angels who have been banished to humans, tempting and inciting humans to evil?"

"In every faith there are fallen gods or angels who have taught man what is good and evil for them. And in every faith the fear of unbelief, of evil, is used as a means of domination. The evil

gods and angels have stolen the fire, from the good gods and brought it to man. They have destroyed paradise by teaching man the ability to gain knowledge. Paradise is only the place in time that describes humans as animals who know neither good nor evil, nor feel any urge to seek explanations for what surrounds them."

Satan leaned against an old pillar and instructed us to take a seat on a piece of rubble. He smiled happily at us, making us



laugh. Satan looked up at the sky and held out his arm. A large insect landed on his palm.

"I've seen that before; it's dangerous," cried Arno.

"This is not normally dangerous, but when it is pursued it calls its brethren and then many of these insects pounce on the pursuers and can sting them and this sting can also be fatal. I built it and they all serve as my eyes and ears on your planet."

We could only marvel, for Satan told us that he had other eyes and ears that looked like animals to our eyes.

The insect flew off again in our direction. Arno and Nico ducked quickly and I let myself fall over backwards. We were still a little afraid.

But Satan continued to tell us about the many planets he had seen and led us first into the kitchen for a small meal and then into the room above the kitchen, which was actually a dining room. Satan tried to explain to us again that the fruit, meat and bread only looked like that, but were actually something else entirely. I guess he could tell by our incredulous faces that we couldn't comprehend it and then just said, "I hope it tastes better to you than what you've been eating and drinking."

Of course it was, and we told Satan so.

There were comfortable cushions above the kitchen and then on one wall we could see pictures of fantastic landscapes on other planets, which we flew over like a bird. He showed us animals that looked very strange and very dangerous. In huge forests there were insects as big as people. Satan explained to us that there was a lot of the carbon and some of the water in the air here and said that we would be living in quite a lean world and that this would be a good way to make a different society than he knew.

What I am writing down here is still in my memory and I didn't really understand it until much later.

Nico remembered again what Satan had said at the heretic trial, "Satan, you said that our village would be burned down. Was that your way of intimidating the Amene into making a different judgment?"

"No, that was just a glimpse into the future, as I know there will be war and it will reach your village rather quickly. I know the plan of the prince who is preparing the war. A difficult time is about to begin for you. In the history books it will be written that this was the time of the warring principalities. Come with me, I'll show you!"

Satan led us to the collapsed castle wall and we looked with horror in the direction where our village lay. A great cloud of smoke was over the area.

Horrified, we looked at Satan. I begged him, "Can't you stop this, please!"

"Angels do not interfere in the realms of men. To commit an even greater sin, I cannot. With you, my friends, I have already gone a bit too far. I have also explained to you why I did so."

Arno couldn't believe it, "There are our brothers and sisters, our parents being murdered."

"Your parents and brothers did. If you hadn't come to the castle because you were too scared, I'm sure you'd be dead now, too."

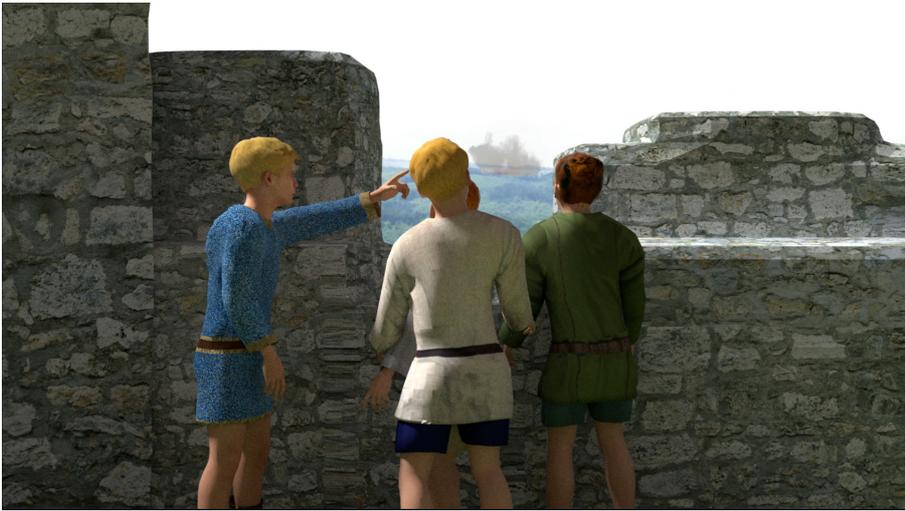
We looked at each other and Nico started to cry.

"You don't have to cry, if a natural disaster had wiped out your village, the result would be the same." Wars, natural disasters, epidemics always bring great suffering to the people affected. But if the people who follow are better off and less likely to die a violent death, then there has been a development. After the wars of the princes there will be a Great King who will establish a new order for a longer time, with better laws and more security for the people. But you will not live to see that."

Nico stopped crying: "At least they're going to paradise now. What's it like there, Satan? Can you tell us something about paradise and show us."

"No, I can't. If it should ever come to pass that you will die, then imagine something where you could live forever. That will be your paradise.

I am immortal, my memory core, what is my I, what I am, remains with me. Your memory core comes into being at your birth and even as it grows, as you go through the experiences of your life, it begins to lose parts at an early age. When you grow very old, you will find that your



memory core, which is created in your brain, becomes smaller and smaller and disappears with death.

My memory core is getting bigger and bigger, I don't forget anything. What I have learned once is never lost. Even if I were to stand before you like this and suddenly be crushed between large stones, I would only lose the last memory and could go on living

with the memory before the accident."

Satan looked at us again with his winning smile, "However, you would have to wait a bit until I descended from heaven again."

Depressed, we went into the tower, but over the food and heavenly drink we forgot everything, feeling cheerful and euphoric as before.

By now it had grown dark and Satan led us into the castle courtyard. "A horde of warriors is approaching the castle hill. I will have to scare them off."

He went to the well, but it was not a well, as we had already found out. We should stay behind and not get scared. That would not be dangerous, but will make the warriors run away in panic. He stood by the well and a red jet of fire shot up into the sky, illuminating everything around, a blue radiant orb rose and was pierced by a subsequent red jet of fire. It was frightening, but also incredibly beautiful.

"Those who have seen this will never come near this ruin," Satan assured us, "tomorrow I will show you something very special, but first you will go cleanse yourselves and then sleep.

The ritual you now know and can do."



After the warm cleansing shower we went to bed, listened to fantastic music to beautiful images. Satan appeared, wished us a good night and we fell blissfully asleep.

After breakfast Satan went with us again to the castle courtyard. We were

very excited to see what we would see today. We lined up in a circle. A flash of blue, which we already knew, lit up and then we saw a castle, which we could not touch, floating there before our eyes. It was very beautiful, with fortified walls, towers, a palace. Arno even discovered a forge. I liked the big keep.

"There's a library in there that I've put together for you. For the first few years, while you are still boys, my knights and helpers will see to your safety."

We were amazed and could not understand what Satan was saying to us. Today I still sometimes wonder why we didn't go mad and crazy back then. We only had our carefree youth to thank for that.

"You will live there as my friends. I cannot accompany you and show you the function and



secrets of the castle. Pandae call me back, there is a war of the gods."

What Satan said exactly I can't remember, at least it sounded like it.

"But there is one more secret I will show you that will help you through the early years when it is a matter of life and death for you. Come along."

We went to the old dilapidated portico and Satan opened the entrance to an underground vault.

"In your castle you will also find such a tomb, accessible only to you. Strangers, should they enter, will be so deterred that they will never attempt to enter there again. Death can also be a deterrent to followers.

Arno, do you have courage to go down there?"

Arno hesitated a little but of us he was indeed the bravest. A little timidly he went down the stairs. Except for a faint glow of light, we could see nothing from the outside.

He wasn't down in the tomb long.

"There was nothing to see but an orb that glowed blue."

"Yes, Arno, this is an intelligence that manages all this when I am not present here. At certain intervals, it informs me of what is happening on this planet. She will also help you in the new castle. Only you three will be able to question her directly in the crypt there. No outsiders will be allowed. Nor will you penetrate further than the crypt into the ground beneath the castle, for down there is the realm of Satan, is my realm."

Satan smiled and looked at us in turn: "A little superstition in the kingdom of evil can be quite helpful, only beware that you do not come under suspicion of having made a contract with the devil. In the beginning, you too will only be able to rule your kingdom by spreading fear. Humans are herd animals, not predators."

In the afternoon Satan still tried to explain to us what possibilities we would have in the new castle. He also said that it is on a peninsula and high mountains provide a natural protection for enemies that will surely exist. The land we should manage well. What we must not forget is education, which is stored for us in the keep. Education would be our first task in the castle. If we could do that, we could survive, otherwise we would perish.

He suggested that Arno should take care of the defense of the castle and the land. Nico would be very well suited for the economy and I should take care of the education and the workshops. The supreme lord of the castle could be changed every year.

Satan spoke to each and every one of us. He told me to promote the education of the young and to see to it that the criteria for the formation of families are such that the distance from the animal kingdom is steadily increased. I would find more detailed information on this in the library. Then he smiled at me in conclusion and said, "See to it that this planet does not end in an idiocracy."

Today I know what he meant by that, back then I didn't know what to do with the term.



On the morning of the following day, Satan saw us off. We went into a frenzy of happiness as he hugged us and kissed us on the forehead. I still have that feeling in my memory, even though I am now old and the last of the three of us.

"You'll be back soon!" pleaded Nico, tears streaming down his face.

Satan smiled at us one last time: "Eternity has no hands."

A large yellow steel bird arrived. We had already seen something like it in his reports about other worlds.

"For you guys, I quickly modified it a bit, since it wasn't made for humans. It will fly slowly so you can see some of your planet."

We got on board and like in a dream we flew to our new home. Even today I dream of this journey at night. We felt like angels ourselves.

All the encounters with Satan and the subsequent life in the castle were an incentive for us to establish a better society. Today I can say that with many setbacks and dangers we had to go through, we succeeded in making life a little better, more civilized, as Satan would say. We always hoped that Satan would return.

When I too will have died, the next generation will experience our encounters with Satan. I hope they will wait for Satan's return just as we did, throughout our lives.

Animated images: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQd63c6QIZs>

Please also visit the website: www.nanina-roman.de

