



## **The Raft** by Tim Spencer

This story is for those who can see the human condition likened to that of many foolish and greedy monkeys set adrift upon an immense ocean, with only a raft made from bananas to prevent them all from drowning.

'The Raft' speaks of the complex journey that we are all offered in life - with the wisdom and the practices of less enlightened times to show us the way forward.

Our destination will be the wasting of our world if we do not turn away from the ignorance, the greed and the arrogant self regard that blinds so many to the danger we all face.

Set in another time and place, 'The Raft' tells of an unwelcome prophesy that sets a teacher named Tomas on a life long mission to convince those around him of an avoidable catastrophe that only he believes the future will bring.

He speaks to the reader directly, and from what he tells us we must judge for ourselves the wisdom of his actions.

Tomas begins by challenging the routines, the rituals and even the laws that are leading his society to disaster - and he is forced to fight, as best he can, the many who refuse to listen and who oppose any change.

In spite of the threat to his life, he continues to trust his beliefs - however unlikely they seem - and soon he loses control of the awesome task that he has taken on.

From outcast to leader, Tomas's lonely role as a 'saviour' can only succeed if fortune favours him - and the nearer he approaches his goal the more his luck

holds out.

But nothing prepares him for the normally reliable forces of nature to turn against them all so suddenly, and the frightening changes to the environment grips them all with confusion and fear.

Then Tomas discovers a fundamental falsehood that has been the foundation of everything they have always known - and everything they have always believed.

Meanwhile, yet another even greater crisis is already approaching.

A powerful alien presence of overwhelming importance is about to realise its own destiny.

And then Tomas's mission will succeed.

Or it will fail.

*“What happened when I read your book was that the bandages that I wear over past hurts somehow came undone and fell away – even wounds that I thought had healed split open and I found myself once more standing on the high precipice which is always present, looking down into the abyss that threatens to engulf me, surrounded by darkness.*

*My soul is permanently standing in a buffeting wind that causes me to sway backwards and forwards. My toes are curled over a tiny lip of rock that juts out whilst my mind is frantically whispering incantations to increase the strength of the wind in front so that I may be pushed back into safety”.*

*“The fact that you have taken this step to write - and write well, something that has a clear, timeless and profound message leaves me in awe. I can appreciate the immensity of the task you must have faced”.*

Allyx. (October 2008)

Dedicated to the dream and the reality of Chiang Mai,  
the mother of my invention.

# The Raft

By

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## I. SOLUTION



## I. I

Not. Still. Dark.

Light. No. Yet.

Knowing begins. After...before.

Words...names...things, knowing.

One thing...whole...separating. Stopping...a start.

Yes. No.

Difference...knowing difference...many things...dissolving...yet...a beginning.

Remember...think...named being. Things become.

Dying, like sleep...not sleep, loss.

Melting. Dissolving. Dissolving, yet solidifying.

The Oneness beyond dispersed and reforming into parts...islands... substance. More loss and less gain. No...like...like the same thing. Sadness and joy...opposites.

Things and perfection are coming and going... and more and less are then and now.

Is that faster?

Being in time is real and...without time is forgotten. No balance is possible.

Forward and back and that space between. Confirmed. Here from there is a journey. The journey.

Happening into the prison of the living. A first feeling.

Memory is the key. Focus. Create space and think. I do remember. The memories are mine.

I have travelled this way before and I remember my arrivals here.

More feelings to create me. More history to guide me. I have no wanting for this physical world. I must create pleasures to balance the pains.

And already that Voice is becoming a curse. That noise of the soul given

words to speak. The talk that claims the self.

How the Voice enslaves. Blinds. Wills itself inferior with its lack of ambition. If only it formed words enough and charged them to name and to speak of all that exists. Most of all things...shunned...still.

Now that deep yearning in the soul. For release. To be fulfilled beyond the wide and the tall and the deep. Imprisoned in defining space. Trapped where only two worlds focus as one. Mastered by what is named and taught and believed.

Understanding sees this truth, not memory. Better reasoning does not burden the here and now.

Have I eyes and yet find myself surrounded by darkness or am I in the light and become blind?

That constant Voice. Not easily tamed but first it must speak of what brings me here again.

Does memory produce the answers while the Voice disputes my knowing of them?

Did I decide upon this journey or was I summoned here? What is the reason? I must recognise my purpose.

I can feel that I am growing further into my mortal senses and the awareness of it is beyond comparing. There are no words here that can state the wonder of this arousal. The Voice surrenders to...a...long...deep...sigh...

Better. Not better. Adjust. Remember the promise of such exquisite happiness that is so betrayed by the fragility and the pain that hides waiting beneath.

Fortunate indeed this state of being is mortal. Only the foolish would welcome an eternity in this realm of suffering and illusion. No choice and no alternative. They are born screaming and surrounded by ignorance. Taught to conform with the ridiculous until free will has been trained to repeat what it has learned.

And then they grow to adulthood immersed in arrogant assumptions about what can not be known. The fear that leads the powerful to rule and the fear of the weak to meekly endure. Bearing the tragedy into the future until sickness or pain or despair reduces them. The certainty of death completing the mystery.

I am not here just to witness again this trial of mortal corruption and the endurance of it glorified.

Only approaching crisis heralds intervention. Within myself I hear of the need that has become perception and calling.

Extraordinary events are underway and the destiny of many cherished souls is always the challenge.

My senses reflex with a terrible wave of panic. A response to the awakening of my instinct to survive. That answer which finds its true value from a question kept hidden. Buried. Death and oblivion. The others outliving yourself.

The true answer will be denied by something inherent in that question. The primal dilemma haunts and mocks. That call upon purpose. Meaning. To justify such universal waste.

The Voice must be harnessed and my worth ordered. Before I open these eyes of mine I will trust the wind and whatever it carries to me. I raise my head and the air that fills my lungs is familiar.

Prompting the Voice come memories that will be heard. Primitives. The fabric of this place is never free from their scent. It marks their place and time.

My children.

The named tribe alone among the many nameless.

The heart within me beats to the rhythm of their lives. Only they are the true inheritors of fortune and despite themselves I will ensure that they achieve their destiny.

It is for future time that my greatest interventions will not be revered as the work of their Gods. Just as it is in past time that as one in their midst I have guided them with new knowledge that they now call their own.

I sense that my return here is not enough. The changes that move with an advancing pace reach out to me with their warning. The primitives are too cautious, too content, too trusting.

I am saddened by their progress. Generation after generation have too strictly observed their rituals and their laws. The very order of their lives that should lead them to attainment is the same that can now lead them to extinction.

I am afraid that my plan will not withstand the pressure that time is placing upon it. My tribe of primitives will resolutely refuse the needed changes even as the menace overwhelms them. To renounce the proven customs and practices of old will be to offend their ancestors. To transgress the rule of law. To defy the Gods.

They must not only be taught of the threat they face but they must also be free to act. Yet how can this be?

They have a leader. Without his bold authority misfortune will overtake those in his command. He must be won.

He is named Mowhuntus like all the chiefs before him. His son too will be named Mowhuntus in his turn, and he must also be made to listen.

Yet Mowhuntus is not the one I would choose. Another of this tribe is more able to understand. Always I fear that my words will not be heard as I say them. Or remembered without foolish error.

How often have the ears of the chosen one resisted the truth. His voice overruling mine to corrupt the message.

Mowhuntus must be the one to act for them all. If he proves unworthy and the message fails I will provide another with the vital knowledge before all is lost.

I do not want them dependant and diminished by an unexplained intervention but I must ensure that right is done. At any cost.

The changes will enlighten them beyond what they know and they will be frightened. The bond with the past will need to break and too many of them will cling to the ancient orders that sustain them.

No matter how it is achieved, their dependance on the past must be broken and they must prove worthy of the challenges ahead of them. Their future is promised and it must be delivered.

The land they call home is dying. They have not the skills to be at one with it. They have learned only to be separate and the land is unforgiving of neglect.

Beyond the forest too are others that disregard the land that nourishes all, and these tribes are brutal. They will come and plunder this place when their own turns against them. There is no escape beyond the mountains either because dangerous tribes are gathered everywhere.

Is there freedom across the water? Such a bold idea. My mind is awed by this awakening. My flesh thrills to it.

More than my mortal presence here will achieve what this proposes but it will be a task to end all uncertainty.

How can any small chance of flesh and bone share the ambitions of a God?

I will make ready the primitives. My children will be given new land and they will learn that to cherish it is to give themselves life. A lasting harmony.

They must learn to connect and flourish. Free from the past and very far from here.

The journey will be made long and their departure will unmake their enemies.

It is such a vision of clarity. What the mighty and the humble together will achieve.

All of the seas will gather together in this place and nothing around will remain uncovered.

Then the water will carry my chosen ones safely upon it and they will look back upon the drowned.

Generations will thrive as they journey away from this place and they will speak of their own destiny and the great adventure that their chief foretold.

They will travel to meet the future that only the journey can take them to and when I return to show them their inheritance it will be with new land and new blood.

In time to come the new lives will evolve beyond anything now conceived and the Gods will never more be needed.

It is determined. My undertakings here and then beyond this place are decided. How can such an enterprise fail?

My primitives must be readied to anticipate the unknown. Quiet routine must not dull their keen reactions and from measured order must spring courageous deeds.

Time coming will test every resolve. Comfort will give way to challenges beyond any expectation. New experiences will be born out of response to necessity. Behaviour will discover its own evolution.

The successful survival of this tribe will determine my own destiny too, and that must be made certain.

But I must not let the Voice, that will ever enslave and confound the mortal mind, be that which obstructs the pursuit of this epic mission. It is such a powerful master that flatters most the foolish and the arrogant.

A head flooded with poor words will give thoughts a perilous voyage.

I will overcome these persuasive obstacles and distractions with the promise that I will stop at nothing to achieve my purpose.

Now it must begin.

## **2. DISTANCE**

## 2. 1

The Sun had only just risen above the far horizon at the start of its journey across the clear blue Sky when I started my long walk along the familiar pathway that leads around the edge of the Raft and the early warmth that I now feel on my face brings me some little comfort after hearing the sad news that spreads so quickly amongst us that she who was my mother passed away unexpectedly as we all slept through the cycle of darkness.

As I amble along I try not to brood about my grief and instead I distract myself with the view that looks out across the still blue surface of the mighty Ocean that covers all of Creation around me with its calm flat waters stretching out to the far horizon in every direction and I cheer myself by gazing upon the marvelous sight of the seemingly endless open space upon the Raft itself with its shallow covering of yellow bananas that sprout up from across the surface of its vast level expanse.

I do not stop to natter with any of my fellows that I meet on my way but I accept their greetings politely and I determine that I am greatly favoured indeed to receive their many kind words that tell me that I am not alone with my sorrow.

My given mate Dolfis - daughter of Dolfat - is waiting patiently for me to return to her and it is only when the Sun is very much higher up in the sky that I arrive back to our chosen place to tell her that my long walk around the margin of our beautiful and precious home has relieved me of much of my sadness.

We embrace each other and as she gently strokes my flowing mane of thick red fur she whispers to me that surely all the other members of the troupe are also hurting as they mourn the loss of a much beloved and greatly respected fellow monkey such as my mother truly was.

I hug Dolfis tightly to me and I feel the softness of her fur against mine as we say together a prayer of thanks to the great and wise God Gonamana who

created all things and in whose divine hands all of His Creation rides and then we speak our praise to His obedient Spirit servants who order our lives.

Looking over the shoulder of my precious mate I see that a gathering of some of the troupe's younger monkeys are quietly walking towards us in a line along one of the narrow pathways that runs between the many wide beds of yellow bananas that surround our chosen place.

Dolfis hears one of the youngsters giggle and she turns to offer them all a polite greeting before she carefully speaks about the sad loss to the troupe of my father's loyal mate Saramis - daughter of Saramo - and that they should not disturb me until after the Spirit of the Clouds has given us the waters of the Cloud-rain but I assure her that I am glad to greet them now and that she should surely leave us and go about her duties which are elsewhere upon the Raft.

When she has gone I bid the youngsters to approach me and as they do they lower their heads as they should when showing me the respect that I am entitled to as an adult and a teacher and they offer me their gifts of yellow bananas that they have picked from the numberless many that grow from the beds found all across the surface of the Raft.

The chatter in my head tells me that the smallest of these youngsters do not yet fully determine how Saramis has been Silenced and how I am saddened by her passing from the troupe because they start to clamour that I should not delay in teaching them more about the words and the stories of our monkey ancestors.

The older ones hush them and I can not help but to grin after I tell them to be comfortable with me because there is much jostling and nattering as they squat down at my feet and as I watch them I quietly say a prayer to the great and wise God Gonamana in thanks for these precious youngsters because in them the future of the troupe surely lies safely.

As they settle down I tell them that nothing is more important to me than to teach the laws and the stories and the ancient wisdom of our monkey troupe as told by the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors which surely must be passed on to each new generation just as it was passed on to me in my turn.

My name is Tomas and I am the grown son of my father who was named Tomag - son of Tomak - and like all of us monkeys in the troupe I am descended from the ancestors of old that began the sacred journey across the waters of the mighty Ocean upon this Raft and together with the rest of my fellows I will serve and honour the great and wise God Gonamana and all his obedient Spirit servants even until the promised destination beyond the far horizon is finally



achieved.

“Respected Tomas...” Says a young male in the formal way as he squats at my feet with the others gathered around him now ordered and quiet.

“...why must we suffer our fear of the cold and hungry sharks that forever pursue the Raft and crave our flesh?”

The youngster who asks me this question is named Skylot - son of Skymat - and he scratches at the fur on his belly as he waits for me to answer.

I look down at the scowl on his young face and I see that along with his developing self confidence he is also learning to control the chatter inside his head and I grin as I recall being as little grown as he is now and how I tried to determine with my infant chatter how things would be if the constant menace of the cold and hungry sharks did not exist in the waters of the mighty Ocean around the Raft.

I tug gently at the long red beard that grows from my chin and I reply.

“It is the will of the great and wise God Gonamana - praise Him.” And all the youngsters respond together by pointing to the Sky as they chant.

“Praise Him.” As they should out of respect for He who gave us Creation.

“...it is His will...” I continue.

“...that as the sacred journey upon our Raft carries us to the promised destination beyond the far horizon the cold and hungry sharks will tirelessly besiege us with a caution that we must always recall His authority over us.”

I turn the leathery palms of my hands upwards as a sign of submission before I continue by saying.

“It is only if we are not faithful and dutiful to Him and we fail to worship and honour Him and His obedient Spirit servants that we need to fear that which is our only peril. Have faith young Skylot...” I say as I squat down and I arrange my long red tail behind me.

“...have faith in what is told to us by the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors.” I add.

Then I reach out and I stroke the smooth fabric of the Raft’s flattened surface with my hand and I say.

“And tread carefully upon the Raft so that you do not fall from its edge.” And I grin to show the youngsters my teeth.

“Like old Lendan.” Whispers Skylas - daughter of Skymat - one of Skylot’s older sisters.

This makes the others giggle and they all start to natter with each other about

the story that is told of an adult male named Lendan - son of Lendos - who suddenly went missing from the troupe and how he must have fallen from the back edge of the Raft while he was ridding himself of his waste.

As I wait for the youngsters to settle down again I look over their heads to the places amongst the beds of yellow bananas beyond them where there are many other members of the troupe going about their routines and I see that some of them are busy with their duties while others have gathered into groups to natter together or to play and game with each other.

I stretch out a leg and with my foot I pick up one of the many yellow bananas that have been gifted to me and with the attention of the youngsters slowly returning to what I have to teach them I start to peel the skin from the precious yellow fruit.

“Lendan - son of Lendos - surely left the safety of the Raft most suddenly and without ceremony...” I say.

“...which was truly a great loss to the troupe. But the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors tell us that when the cold and hungry sharks receive the body of a monkey it matters not if the flesh is cold or warm for the troupe will always gain merit with the Spirit of the Ocean.” And I chew purposefully on the fruit of the yellow banana as I look deliberately at each one of their faces in turn to determine if any of them wants to ask me a question.

I see that Simolas - son of Lord Simotan - is in the gathering before me and because he is the eldest son of Lord Simotan who is the Alpha and therefore the leader of the troupe it is for Simolas to take control the troupe in his turn after his father but for now he is not yet grown to be an adult and he is still gaining the wisdom that he will need.

I nod to Simolas out of the respect that he is due as the Alpha-to-be and the chatter in my head questions why he did not come here with his two younger brothers who are named Simonas and Marotan and I can not help but to then picture the face of my mother Saramis - daughter of Saramo - and to recall the regret that she felt by not giving me any brothers or sisters to grow up with.

Next to Simolas is Monatus - daughter of Monaglo - who is a favorite of mine because she is much like how Dolfis was when she too was not yet grown to be an adult and she is with her older sister Sataglo - daughter of Monaglo - who is busy with picking at the fur of Monatus with her long delicate fingers.

Also squatting down with Simolas is Raynet - daughter of Raytec - whose wide hips and plump rounded belly makes her a much admired young female

and the chatter in my head tells me that when she is ready to birth young ones of her own she will disappoint many willing males in the troupe when she bonds with only one of them and becomes his mate.

She looks at me confidently and has a question.

“Respected Tomas...” She begins.

“...why are we not told of how many cycles of darkness and light that will pass before the Raft completes its sacred journey and reaches the promised destination beyond the far horizon?”

I swallow the last of the yellow banana before I say.

“It is another of the many things that are hidden from us Raynet - daughter of Raytec...” And I put aside the skin of the precious yellow fruit that is now empty.

“...the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors speak not of what awaits us at the promised destination beyond the far horizon or of how long we must endure before we arrive. We are told only of the start of the sacred journey and what the troupe has witnessed until now. It is for us to be obedient and to await our destiny.”

Without delay Simolas - son of Lord Simotan - clenches his sturdy hands into fists and blurts out.

“Respected Tomas. We are surely always obedient in His eyes for we are kept so by our noble leader Lord Simotan.”

Simolas has not yet grown to be tall and powerful as we all expect of an Alpha-to-be but he has learned that holding his head up high displays his jutting brow and his prominent jaw and just as his pale red fur is a gift from Lord Simotan we all too pray that he will also soon have his father’s strength and wisdom.

“Yes Simolas - son of Lord Simotan - It is our greatest hope that with the wise leadership of your father we will proudly continue to be named the chosen ones of the great and wise God Gonamana - praise Him.”

And again the youngsters all respond together by pointing to the Sky as they chant.

“Praise Him.”

The chatter in my head then tells me that this is my chance to teach them again the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors that speak of those very many cycles of darkness and light long since passed and before the start of the sacred journey when our troupe gained the honour of becoming the favourites of

our precious Creator.

I grin at the youngsters politely and they eagerly stare back at me as I recall being an infant myself and learning the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors not only from my father Tomag - son of Tomak - who was a teacher before me but also from the Spirit-Guide of the troupe who was a monkey named Sergis - son of Sergat - who had the given title of Wise Sergis.

Tomag and Wise Sergis have both long since been Silenced and have passed from the troupe and it is Loomis - son of Loomat - who was the chosen apprentice to Wise Sergis that has taken on the duties of the Spirit-Guide in his turn and now as the one named Wise Loomis he not only advises the Alpha and directs the troupe but he also regularly instructs me so that the troupe's wisdom is passed on.

I continue to grin as I sniff at the smells around me and then I look directly at Monatus - daughter of Monaglo - who has already learned many of the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors and who has already proved to me that she can speak clearly and without confusion.

She returns my grin and she seems to enjoy it as I look at her body which is starting to grow into adulthood with her breasts grown larger and on them her nipples now dark and swollen and the chatter in my head tells me that soon she will develop her adult fur and then her cycles of seed-blood will begin.

“Monatus - daughter of Monaglo...” I say gently.

“...tell us about what you have learned of the cycles of darkness and light long since passed and before the start of the sacred journey and what is told of the Homeland of Dry-Creation with its ancient forest of trees where our monkey ancestors lived amongst the diversity of mortal creatures.”

As always Monatus is eager to please me and she straightens her back and begins to speak of what she has already been taught about how the great and wise God Gonamana first produced the Homeland of Dry-Creation which He birthed out of that which was nothing and how in the centre of it He brought forth a pair of sacred mountains so that the taller of the two would be His exclusive domain where He alone lived.

She continues by saying that He then surrounded His sacred mountain home with a boundless and fruitful forest of trees that covered all of the Homeland of Dry-Creation and in it He placed the monkey ancestors that were one of many kinds of mortal creatures that were made with much diversity to live beneath His protective gaze.

Then she tells of how He set upon the second and the smaller of the pair of sacred mountains the family of the Immortals whose duty was to tend the ancient forest of trees and to care for the monkey ancestors together with the other mortal creatures who were their companions and who were all not of His same form.

Monatus is good at telling this story and she speaks with confidence the words that tell of the things named trees and mountains and mortal creatures so that it seems that she has witnessed them all herself and because the other youngsters are listening to her so intently I give her a sign of encouragement that she should continue telling us more about what she has learned.

Next she tells of how the monkey ancestors showed humility and were full of gratitude and thankfulness to the great and wise God Gonamana while the mortal creatures who shared the ancient forest of trees with them showed no such respect for Him.

And then she speaks about how the mortal creatures soon came to displease and anger Him not only with their greed for every kind of food and with the careless dropping of their waste but also with their unrestrained mating whenever their lustful desires took control of them.

Monatus suddenly falters and I determine that the chatter in her head has distracted her.

“You have recalled well.” I reassure her and I reach across to stroke the soft red fur that grows from the side of her face.

“The lustful desires of which you speak...” I tell her gently.

“...you have surely yet to determine their power and thus how to control them.”

As I grin kindly into her face I am suddenly aware of my seed-limb moving between my legs and when I hear a muffled giggle I determine that I too have become distracted.

“And so...” I say as I quickly order the chatter in my head.

“...we became His favourites. His chosen ones. The only ones upon the Homeland of Dry-Creation that did not offend Him and the only ones to be saved from His wrath. And with branches from the trees of the ancient forest where sprouted the precious yellow bananas He created for us a Raft. With the Raft He promised us a long sacred journey to a new home that would be our reward for the respect that we always showed to Him and to His Creation. Praise Him indeed.”

Then I detect a change in the smells around me and I glance up to see the member of the council of Elders that is named Gitlong - son of Gitlang - as he shuffles along on his bowed legs towards the back of the Raft with a handful of empty yellow banana skins.

Gitlong has been with the troupe for a great many cycles of darkness and light long since passed and his eyes do not see well enough any more to stop him from straying from the narrow pathways when he goes from place to place upon the Raft and he curses when he mistakenly steps on some of the precious yellow fruits sprouting by his feet as he walks between the beds of yellow bananas.

The chatter in my head tells me that he journeys to one of the many places found along the back edge of the Raft where all members of the troupe must go to when they have the need to rid themselves of their waste and I silently pray that his journey is a safe one.

Turning my attention back to the youngsters I run my fingers through the thick mane of red fur hanging down over my shoulders and I continue with the story that I am telling.

“It is then that in His disappointment and anger He made the numberless cycles of darkness and light come to be and with them He made the waters of the Cloud-rain to fall down upon the Homeland of Dry-Creation both in the darkness and in the light until there was a mighty Ocean without limits. It fell without stopping until the ancient forest of trees was drowned and the two sacred mountains were covered over and the mortal creatures that were bad in His sight were washed away. Only we His chosen ones were spared together with those that He named sharks that were cold and hungry and obedient only to His will.”

I pause to look at Skylot who is staring at me with eager eyes while his mouth hangs wide open. I turn my attention to his sister.

“Skylas - daughter of Skymat...” I say to her gently.

“...can you recall what did happen to the family of the Immortals whose sacred mountain home was lost with the coming of the waters of the mighty Ocean?”

She grins at me because she has been taught this before and she recalls proudly.

“From their sacred mountain home which lay in the dark shadow of His precious domain they were taken to the realm of the Spirits beyond where the

cycles of darkness and light begin. And there they do remain unseen by us still where they give order to our lives through their gifts to us of the Sun and the Moon and the Clouds and the Sky and the waters of the mighty Ocean. And we give thanks for these Spirits who are the obedient servants of the great and wise God Gonamana Himself - praise Him.”

And with much joy I join with the youngsters as together we all point to the Sky and chant noisily.

“Praise Him”.

The chatter in my head then tells me that the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors are being well learned and that even if these youngsters can not picture what some of the words truly speak of then at least the words themselves will be recalled and passed on until they are spoken without falsity by a generation yet to come at the place of the promised destination beyond the far horizon when the sacred journey is ended.

Looking up into the clear blue Sky I see that the bright yellow disc of the Sun has journeyed up from the far horizon to a place that is high above the Raft and I determine that soon it will start the part of its journey that will take it down to the far horizon on the other side of the Raft but not before the waters of the Cloud-Rain have come.

“Go now...” I say to the youngsters.

“...enjoy the nourishment that He provides for us and may the Spirit of the Sky protect you all when the dark shadow of the Cloud-shade is upon us.”

The youngsters jump up and as they respectfully bow to me as they should I tell them that after the Spirit of the Clouds has given us the Cloud-rain and before the Sun is replaced in the Sky by the Moon when the cycle of darkness comes upon the Raft there will be a ceremony for the Silenced at the place of rituals.

They nod and they tell me how sad they are at the passing of she that birthed me who was named Saramis - daughter of Saramo - and they scamper away to gather yellow bananas which they will take to their own mothers as gifts to celebrate the joy that the coming of the Cloud-rain brings.

I stay where I am and as I squat down alone I listen to the chatter in my head and to the nattering of the troupe around me while across the waters of the mighty Ocean ahead of the Raft and above the far horizon to which we journey I watch the first of the Clouds forming which are small and white but many in number.

I am filled with such gratitude that once again the Spirit of the Clouds has not forsaken us and with my eyes closed I give thanks to the great and wise God Gonamana for gifting us with His obedient Spirit servants that never fail to provide for His only chosen ones.

Then I natter quietly to myself some words that I am preparing to speak as a tribute to Saramis at the ceremony for the Silenced when all members of the troupe will gather together at the place of rituals at the back of the Raft where we will give thanks for her fellowship before we offer up her cold still body to the Spirit of the mighty Ocean.

The unexpected Silencing of Saramis by the Spirit of the Moon when the last cycle of darkness was upon the Raft has bestowed upon me as her only son the duty of speaking to my fellows about how her membership of the troupe gave us all joy and it makes me feel both sad and proud to have this honour.

Saramis - daughter of Saramo - was not only the given mate of my father who was greatly respected by all of the troupe she was also a skilled teacher who could sing without fault the ancient songs of our monkey ancestors and she could perform with unrivalled grace the steps of our traditional dances which all of us will sadly miss.

Gentle fingers stroking my mane and a soft voice from behind me whispering my name tells me that I am joined by my own given mate Dolfis - daughter of Dolfat - who has returned to me from her duties and with her she has brought some yellow bananas that she has picked for me and after I have politely greeted her we say together the prayer of thanks to the great and wise God Gonamana for the coming of the Cloud-rain.

It was Lord Simotan together with Wise Loomis who chose Dolfis to be the female that I Bonded with and who I was to have as my loyal and faithful mate and because the Alpha and the Spirit-Guide of the troupe are the highest authorities over all that happens on the Raft they honoured me greatly not only by making the choice themselves but also by choosing one so greatly admired by all to share my routines and my duties.

Dolfis is a gentle female with a chatter inside her head that never confuses or distracts her and like that of both her sister and her brother the colour of her fur is a distinctive mix of yellow and red just as is the colour of the Sun when it first shows itself from behind the far horizon at the start of the cycle of light.

My precious Dolfis is also much envied for her large rounded breasts which are not only pleasing to look at but they also promise to feed plenty of milk to a



young one which we all pray that she will soon birth in her turn before too many cycles of darkness and light yet come to pass.

It saddens her that she has not yet fulfilled her duty to the great and wise God Gonamana in birthing me a young one of my own and the lack of joy that we all feel frustrates Wise Loomis greatly because he surely determines that Dolfis and I have failed to heed the words of guidance and direction that he continues to speak to us.

None can tell why Dolfis does not carry a new young one in her belly because not only Wise Loomis but also the females skilled and practiced in the ways of birthing have advised the both of us with great care about the rituals and the prayers that make merit with the Spirit of the Moon which has been named as her mating-guardian and Dolfis and I do not shirk the duty and the joy of the giving and the receiving of my seed.

“My precious Tomas...” Says Dolfis softly as she nuzzles her face under my chin and I feel the gentle wind made from her words ruffling the long fur of my mane.

“...I have heard that all is prepared at the place of rituals where the body of Saramis - daughter of Saramo - is awaiting her ceremony for the Silenced.”

We hug and I tell her that I have been trying to find the best words to speak as the tribute to she who was my mother and when Dolfis replies her voice betrays her sadness.

“Oh Tomas...” She sighs.

“...your father and his loyal mate are both now gone from us and I have failed you with my body that continues with the cycles of seed-blood that our mating does not stop. I pray that the great and wise God Gonamana - praise Him - will ease your pain?”

I point a finger to the Sky.

“Praise Him.” I say as I should and then I add quietly.

“You must not be sad Dolfis for together we must have faith that in the cycles of light yet to pass we will find joy in our turn.”

The small white clouds that have been forming above the far horizon ahead of the Raft have grown bigger and darker so that they have now merged together to form a large dark mass that is quickly growing and spreading upwards to cover much of the Sky and to approach the Sun which is now directly above us.

I tell Dolfis that it is surely the will of the great and wise God Gonamana if

He chooses not to favour me with a new young one and as I continue to comfort her the bright yellow disc of the Sun becomes hidden from view and the dark shadow of the Cloud-shade covers the Raft.

Dolfis and I continue to hug each other as the gloom spreads across the entire surface of the waters of the mighty Ocean from far horizon to far horizon and together we say our words of thanks to Him for giving us fur to protect us against the chill when the Sun no longer shines its warmth upon us.

Then we do not have to wait long for the first big drops of water to fall and as Dolfis and I get wetter and wetter as the Cloud-rain falls harder and faster we cannot help but to grin and to laugh as we accept this gift from the Spirit of the Clouds.

All around us our fellow monkeys turn their faces up to the Clouds and with their mouths open wide they start to drink in as much of the falling water as they need to nourish themselves and so Dolfis and I drink too and we bathe and we give thanks to the great and wise God Gonamana for gifting us with this wonderful torrent of water that also washes and refreshes everything in Creation.

Then we listen to the noisy sound of the waters of the Cloud-rain as it splashes down all around us onto the beds of yellow bananas and onto the places between them where our neighbours have chosen to live and also onto the pathways that lead from place to place.

Dolfis and I grin at each other as we huddle together and we watch the flood of water that is washing around our feet and I recall the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors that tell of the waters of the Cloud-rain that are sent not only to relieve His chosen ones of thirst but also to nourish the precious yellow bananas in their many beds as they grow from the surface of the Raft in their shallow dense layers from such a numberless host of short green sprouting stalks.

And as the plentiful Cloud-rain flows away to spill from the edges of the Raft I speak a prayer of thanks for the muchness of its waters that also surely pass into the fabric of the tightly interwoven tangled branches that is the flattened surface of the Raft and which ensures that our precious yellow fruits do continue to grow.

My fur is heavy with water as I then stare at Dolfis who now stretches her neck upwards with her mouth open wide and it is with very much joy that I watch the waters of the Cloud-rain running down from her face and onto her

breasts where they drip from her nipples that have cooled and hardened.

But soon the Cloud-rain falls more gently and then it stops altogether as the dark mass of Clouds above us continues its journey to the far horizon that is behind the Raft and when there is no more Cloud to cover the Sun and the dark shadow of the Cloud-shade passes from the Raft my fellows and I give thanks to the Spirit of the Clouds and we all begin the custom of grooming.

Dolfis and I lick the water from each other's fur and we greet the return of the Sun which warms and dries us and when we are finished we look up at the now clear blue Sky and we determine that we will carry on with our duties until the Sun is nearer to the end of its journey when the troupe must gather for the ceremony for the Silenced.

## 2. 2

The place of rituals is the largest place on the surface Raft where no yellow bananas are allowed to sprout and it is the only place that is big enough for the whole troupe to gather all together when we need to celebrate or to perform an important ritual like the ceremony for the Silenced.

The place of rituals is found at the back edge of the Raft and it can be approached using any of the many pathways that lead to it between the beds of yellow bananas at its boundry and now that the Sun is approaching the far horizon the troupe has gathered there and is sadly preparing to observe the passing from the troupe of Saramis - daughter of Saramo.

Saramis was a much respected female who not only birthed a new male member for the benefit of the troupe but she was also an Adept at teaching the troupe's ancient ways and practices as well as being a close ally and a mentor to Marinat - daughter of Matinat - the Consort of Lord Simotan.

It has been decreed by Wise Loomis that the Spirit of the Moon came to Saramis during the last cycle of darkness since passed and it stopped the dream-pictures of her sleep so that when the Sun once again replaced the Moon in the Sky it was found that the chatter in her head was Silent and her flesh was cold.

The still body of Saramis that has been brought to the place of rituals is lying close to the back edge of the Raft so that her feet point to the far horizon from where we have journeyed and her sightless eyes are open and they stare up to the Sky.

According to the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors the chief speaker at this ceremony must be the Alpha and Lord Simotan kneels beside the body of Saramis and he prepares himself with his head bowed low so that his wide pale red mane of long fur falls forwards across his broad muscular shoulders.

Opposite to Lord Simotan and on the other side of Saramis kneels Wise Loomis with his small thin body covered in a growing amount of grey fur and

piled next to him are the offerings of yellow bananas that have been brought as tributes by the members of the troupe.

Lord Simotan looks up and he asks if all of the troupe are gathered and being assured that none of us are absent he begins to speak.

“Saramis - daughter of Saramo - for the joy that your life gave us here we rejoice. You were of the chosen ones that link the hopes of the ancestors to the bliss of those that will come after us when a generation of our troupe will achieve the promised destination beyond the far horizon and for that we give thanks to the great and wise God Gonamana - praise Him.” And as one we all respond together by pointing to the Sky as we chant.

“Praise Him”.

Lord Simotan then tells the troupe about the life of Saramis and of her worth to the troupe both as the loyal mate of Tomag - son of Tomak - and as an important teacher of the manners and the skills of the ancestors.

Beside me Dolfis is looking sad as she stares out across the waters of the mighty Ocean where on its surface the brown waste from our bodies and the skins of the yellow bananas that we rid from the Raft float behind us like a long straight tail leading back to the far horizon as we journey onwards.

The words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors tells us to rid the Raft of our Silenced fellows in the same way and so we always dutifully leave their still bodies behind as offerings of appeasement to the Spirit of the Ocean to ensure our safe passage across its mighty waters and when the discarded flesh is quickly eaten by the cold and hungry sharks that will always follow us it is determined to be His will and a warning to us all to remain obedient.

When Lord Simotan has finished speaking he looks across at me so that I might add my words of tribute but from looking at Dolfis and after listening to what has already been spoken the chatter in my head has become distracted and I feel my brow creasing into a frown as in the pause that follows I silently struggle to find the words that I want to speak.

Wise Loomis then turns his head to look at me carefully and when Dolfis senses my growing discomfort she reaches out and gives my hand a gentle squeeze.

“The loyal mate of my father was like the Sun in the Sky for she made us all warm with her wisdom and her kindness...” I begin clumsily.

“...and with the milk from her breasts she gave me life...and when I took to me my own loyal mate Dolfis at my ceremony of Bonding...Saramis - daughter

of Saramo - sang the songs and danced the steps that made us very proud and would have surely made our ancestors feel greatly regarded."

These words are not the ones that I had wanted to speak but despite my distraction I continue to talk and when water runs from my eyes the troupe look pleased and they nod with approval that Saramis is surely being honored by me with due respect.

Then Wise Loomis invokes the Spirits that order our lives and he speaks on behalf of each of them in their turn.

The Spirit of the Sky. The Spirit of the Ocean. The Spirit of the Sun. The Spirit of the Clouds.

Lastly he speaks for the Spirit of the Moon which he tells us is a worthy and obedient servant to the great and wise God Gonamana and that the Spirit of the Moon was only performing its duty in Silencing Saramis and that none of us should question His divine purpose.

The final words of tribute come from Marinat - daughter of Matinat - the Consort of Lord Simotan who stands proudly beside Simolas together with his brothers Simonas and Marotan - sons of Lord Simotan – and she tells us about her beloved mentor and how short seems a single life compared to the length of the sacred journey.

The body of Saramis is then ready to be given up to the Spirit of the Ocean and because the flattened surface of the Raft is about the height above the surface of the waters of the mighty Ocean of one adult male standing upon the shoulders of another although the body is reverently lowered it must then be dropped from the back of the Raft and it makes a loud splash before it slowly sinks beneath the spreading waves and ripples that its fall creates.

From where I am standing I can see that young Skylot is close enough to the edge of the Raft to witness the quick movement in the water below as a flurry of large grey shapes rise up from the mighty Ocean's depths to claim the flesh that was once our beloved Saramis.

Skylot stares in awe at what he sees until he is overcome with fear at this always brief sight of the cold and hungry sharks and he hurriedly turns away to seek comfort from Skymat his father.

With the body of Saramis rid from the Raft Wise Loomis leads us all in the ancient chant of gratitude that the troupe must call out to the Spirit of the Ocean to speak of our thanks for it accepting the flesh of our fellow as a gift and when we are finished the ceremony for the Silenced is over.

The Sun has now completed much of its journey to the far horizon and so the troupe quietly sign their respect and their gratitude not only to Lord Simotan and to his Consort but also to Wise Loomis before they move away along the various pathways towards their chosen places on all parts of the Raft so that they can await the coming of the Moon and the sleep that it demands of us all.

Dolfis and I too set off for our chosen place which is towards the front part of the Raft and because the cycle of darkness will soon be upon us we do not natter together as we go but rather we walk quickly while feeding on yellow bananas that we pick along the way.

Like all of the other very many places found across the surface of the Raft where an adult male can choose to live with his mate after their given ceremony of Bonding the chosen place of Dolfis and I resembles the place of rituals except that it is very much smaller just as it is linked to everywhere else by the numberless narrow pathways that run between the beds of yellow bananas.

We arrive at our chosen place just as the reddened disc of the Sun is touching the far horizon and so we say together a short prayer to the Spirit of the Moon asking that we will be protected when the darkness covers the Raft and then we quickly say another prayer to ask for the safe return of the Sun in its turn.

When we have finished we hug each other before we settle ourselves down to sleep and the quiet sounds of praying and nattering from our neighbours around us soon stop as we all wait for the cycle of darkness to begin in silence.

I keep my eyes open so that I can watch the Sun sink down and out of sight behind the far horizon but I can not keep them from closing as the light in the Sky quickly starts to fade and from the far horizon on the other side of Raft the pale blue disc of the Moon surely begins to rise up to give a faint glow to the already darkened Sky there.

Dolfis is pressed up against my back with her arm around me which she likes to do and because she has finished whispering a prayer to the Spirit of the Moon so that she will be blessed with a new young one growing in her belly I do not have to wait long before I feel her relax into sleep so that I too can let go of the chatter in my head and surrender myself to the dream-pictures of the cycle of darkness.

## 2. 3

It is told to us by the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors that to end each cycle of light the great and wise God Gonamana commands the waters of the mighty Ocean beyond the far horizon to accept the much travelled Sun after its journey across the Sky.

We are also told that with the coming of each cycle of darkness He allows His obedient Spirit servants to have respite from their duties both to Him and to His chosen ones which leaves the troupe without the guidance that orders our lives.

And so it is that He gave us the Spirit of the Moon to always watch over us whenever there is darkness upon the Raft and the troupe is made to sleep without waking so that we do not witness the pale blue disc of the Moon as it travels the darkened Sky.

The words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors also tell us that when we are settled down to sleep we surrender up the constant chatter in our heads that we hear during each cycle of light so that the playful Spirits who are free to visit the Raft can use us for their games and their sport while our sleeping bodies remain safe from any harm.

And these diversions that the Spirits enjoy when my fellows and I are sleeping do surely fill our heads with mysterious dream-pictures that we are not allowed to recall and when the Spirits return to their duties at the start of the next cycle of light when the Sun starts another journey across the Sky the troupe can then awaken again with all of the dream-pictures gone and the chatter in their heads restored.

I remain quiet and still as I huddle down next to my precious Dolfis and with the chatter in my head repeating the prayer that she was offering up to the Spirit of the Moon as the cycle of darkness came upon the Raft I try to picture how it will be when she has a new young one growing in her belly.

I can feel the warmth from her body against my back but with my eyes still



closed I can not determine why I feel that something is wrong and why there is such a new and complete silence surrounding me.

The chatter in my head tells me that the cycle of light must surely be arriving upon the Raft because I have awakened from my sleep and yet I am suddenly afraid to look for the light of the Sun that must soon brighten the Sky.

I shiver and I question why I feel so chilled and also so full of fear.

I quietly whisper a prayer of my own to the great and wise God Gonamana that asks for His guidance and then instead of patiently waiting for a sign that the cycle of darkness is over I force myself to open my eyes despite the chatter in my head that is telling me not to.

At first I can not determine what I am looking at because there are no words spoken by the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors that tell us of any monkey that has before now witnessed the Raft when the cycle of darkness is upon it and yet here I am looking at the pale blue disc of the Moon high above the far horizon as it surely travels the darkened Sky.

My belly tightens and my head becomes light as I shiver harder and shake even as I tell myself that what I am witnessing can not be so.

I look round to see if Dolfis is safe and I become unsteady with wonder at the sight of the yellow bananas around our chosen place that look so strange in the light from the Moon and I marvel at the pale blue sheen on the fur of my faithful mate.

Dolfis is still sleeping and so I can not share with her my amazement at seeing what no other monkey before me has surely ever witnessed and I start to question why it is me that has been chosen for this duty and for what purpose I have been awakened like this.

Despite having Dolfis so close to me I determine that I am truly very alone and the chatter in my head tells me that this surely is what did happen to Saramis when the Spirit of the Moon came to take her from the troupe and I start to pray that I am not now to be Silenced in my turn.

Helplessness and an overwhelming sadness make water run from my eyes and I urgently pray that I be saved from passing from the troupe and spared from being parted from my loyal mate.

But it is too late because in front of me on one of the narrow pathways that lead to our chosen place I see that walking towards where I am huddled down next to Dolfis is the one who has come to take the chatter from my head and the warmth from my flesh.

A tall figure that is walking as quietly as a dark shadow emerges from the gloom and despite its body looking thin and weak and its legs being long and surely quite frail I can not stop from being terrified at its approach.

The pale blue light from the Moon shines off its smooth black skin and it shocks me to see that it has no fur on any part of its body just as it does not display a mane around its small round head which I see has no dignified brow and only a small weak jaw.

I do not move and I pray that it has not seen me but steadily the tall dark figure steps closer before it stops in front of me and glares directly into my face with a pair of large pale eyes.

Then it turns to look around as if it is unsure of where it is and I am again shocked because I see that from the base of its smooth narrow back there is no tail.

The chatter in my head quickly becomes overwhelmingly distracted and I try not to whimper as the tall dark figure then looks back at me again and slowly steps nearer so that it can stare down on me.

With just the pale light from the far blue disc of the Moon to see it by I gaze up at the form of this Spirit servant made flesh that has been sent to Silence me and I wait for it to do its terrible duty even as it continues to stare into my frightened eyes and it leans forward to see my face more closely.

I am shivering and shaking very much now and I pray that my precious Dolfis does not wake up so that she has to witness whatever will be done to separate my chatter from my flesh.

I want to beg so that Dolfis is spared but I can only silently wonder at the Spirit's strange and impossibly different face where there is displayed a confidence and a mighty wisdom that surely was not gained from any troupe or its Lore but rather from some other place beyond the determination of a monkey.

"You are not stayed by the Moon as your nature demands of your kind." It says quietly before stepping back so as not to frighten me further.

The chatter in my head tells me that surely if I had the gifts of a Spirit-Guide then its words would find a home within me and I would determine what is being said to me.

"You are wise to fear me even though you have powers that are greater than your fellows." It then says with a voice that seemingly reaches out to every part of the Raft where surely the rest of the troupe remain undisturbed and sleeping.

"I know you can see me and I hope that I am speaking with words that you can understand..." It then adds when I do not reply.

"...will you not speak with me?"

I find some little comfort in the gentle sound of its words and I try to speak.

"W...w...what Spirit are you that allows me to see the Moon as it journeys the darkened Sky...?" My words are quiet and unsteady.

"...is it that I am without merit that you come to Silence me so soon after taking Saramis - daughter of Saramo?"

And the dark figure grins at me as if I were a youngster that is learning to take his first steps.

"I am no Spirit that you worship come to take you..." It says giving a short cruel laugh.

"...for I am the Spirit that the Kin of Black Tribe call upon for guidance and I have come to seek one among you that will hear the prophesy that tells of the destiny that awaits you all when the great changes come and your fate is enjoined with those that I seek to protect."

I hear the words that are spoken despite a great confusion that distracts me as I question if this dark figure is truly a dream-picture that the playful Spirits are creating in my head and which I am now somehow witnessing as I sleep.

"Listen well monkey..." I am then told.

"...there is a greater wisdom beyond your own and you will know fear as you come to learn what is already falsely spoken when the many that you have not yet seen come to seek the same rewards that you were the first to receive."

And the voice seems now to be inside my head as the dark figure continues to speak.

"You must deny the wisdom of those that live not to reach the destination that you seek because the failure of your journey will not be witnessed by them when you all discover that your final home lies beyond where is now the water all around you."

Again I hear what is spoken but the chatter in my head tells me that if what I am witnessing is truly the sport and the games of the Spirits that are at rest from their duties then I am surely still sleeping safely next to my precious Dolfis and all else is but the dream-pictures which should be hidden from me.

The dark figure leans forward again and I see sadness in its large pale eyes.

"If those that seek my guidance become lost from my wisdom..." It says.

"...then your destiny too will be lost and so will be the joys and the rewards

that will come in the sharing of all that Creation can offer."

And the dark figure then stares at me silently as if waiting for me to reply.

I stare back at the smooth black form that my eyes see standing before me and I determine that I will surely not recall this meeting when the playful Spirits depart and the Sun starts its journey across the Sky at the start of another cycle of light.

The dark figure then shakes its head and I watch as a look of sadness upon its face quickly becomes a look of disappointment.

"I can only trust that you do not fail..." It says turning away from me.

"...for my time with you is finished..." It adds as it starts to walk away.

"...until the Kin of the Black Tribe find you"

And the dark figure continues to walk away from me back along the same pathway that brought it to my chosen place.

When I can no longer see its form through the gloom I become overwhelmed by a feeling of joy that I have not after all been Silenced and taken from the troupe.

I look at Dolfis who has the pale blue light from the Moon softly glowing from the fur on her face and as I close my eyes to say a prayer of gratitude that my loyal mate and I will still be together when the Sun returns to the Sky I feel a great tiredness come over me and the chatter in my head is replaced by darkness.

## 2. 4

Dolfis stirs and her movement awakens me.

I open my eyes to see that the cycle of light is coming upon the Raft because the bright yellow disc of the Sun is starting to rise up from beyond the far horizon.

The chatter in my head is slow to return but it soon starts to picture the dark figure that spoke to me its words of prophesy about the destiny of the troupe when the rest of the troupe was sleeping and the fear that I felt when I saw the Moon travelling the darkened Sky returns to me.

“Precious Tomas. You are shaking...” Says Dolfis.

“Let me warm you.” She adds as she presses her body against mine and starts to smooth and caress my fur with her gentle fingers.

Despite that I can not determine how it is that I am able to recall what did happen in the last cycle of darkness so soon since passed the chatter in my head tells me that I should give thanks to the Great and wise God Gonamana because I was not Silenced and because I am still with my precious Dolfis enjoying the early warmth from the Sun.

I close my eyes and I quietly start to pray but I am distracted because Dolfis is stroking my body very tenderly and she is reaching between my legs to take my seed-limb in her hand.

“Let us be close for I have prayed to the Spirit of the Moon.” She tells me and she nuzzles up close to me while she strokes my seed-limb until it is warm and hard and the smell of her readiness fills my nostrils.

She urges me to mount her which I willingly do and we quietly say together the prayer that seeks His blessing as we mate with vigour and great feeling.

My seed is not soon released because my head still has in it much chatter that confuses me but when I feel Dolfis tremble and I hear her eager whimpers the release comes powerfully and it feels like the Sun’s heat is bursting out from

beneath my belly.

“ Oh great and wise God Gonamana - praise Him”. Dolfis pants and we both point to the Sky and respond as we should.

Then we cling to each other as we wait for the joy to fade and I feel my chest thumping and the wind passing quickly in and out of my mouth as my head becomes quiet and free from distracting chatter at last.

We rest until the Sun has journeyed to a higher place in the clear blue Sky and we feed on yellow bananas that we pick from the beds around our chosen place.

Then we determine that we both must visit the back of the Raft where we will rid ourselves of our waste and so we gather up the empty skins of the yellow bananas that we have eaten and together we set off along the pathway leading away from our chosen place and past our neighbours who have witnessed our mating.

They grin and they show their approval with words of favour saying that they will pray to the great and wise God Gonamana so that He will bless us with a new young one and we pause briefly to give our thanks to each of them before we continue our walk along the pathways leading to the back of the Raft and we do not stop again except to exchange polite greetings with those of our fellows that we meet on our way.

There are many places along the back edge of the Raft that are only used by the troupe when they need to rid themselves of their waste and on arriving at one of these places we join the others who have already gathered there to leave behind in the waters of the mighty Ocean the brown waste from their bodies and also the empty skins of the yellow bananas that have been used afterwards to clean their fur.

Dolfis and I squat down next to our fellows and we natter with them as we let our waste fall down into the waters of the mighty Ocean behind us and when we are finished we wipe ourselves with the empty skins of the yellow bananas which we then also drop from the back edge of the Raft.

Then Dolfis wants me to go with her to the front of the Raft where many of the youngsters of the troupe like to play games or to rest and watch the gentle waves made by the front of the Raft as it journeys forward through the waters of the mighty Ocean but I tell her that I have to go to the given place of the Spirit-Guide and there seek the guidance of Wise Loomis.

I determine that I will not tell Dolfis that while she and the troupe slept I

pictured a dark figure that spoke words that truly puzzled me because I surely should not be recalling such things and it would only frighten her and so we part from each other without any more words and I walk the narrow pathways to approach where Wise Loomis is nattering with Tapus - son of Parus - one of our fellow adult males who is receiving guidance about his duties to the female that he has not long since passed Bonded with and taken as his loyal mate.

I do not want to interrupt them and so I squat down on one of the many stepping places that lead into a bed of yellow bananas from a pathway nearby and I listen as Wise Loomis tells Tapus about what the troupe expects of him now that he has chosen a place on the Raft which he will share with his new mate.

As I wait I quietly give thanks to the great and wise God Gonamana for granting me Dolfis who was tutored with much skill about the duties and practices of being a Bonded female even since before she was chosen to be my mate and then I pick some of the precious yellow fruits that grow so wonderfully ripe around me.

When Wise Loomis has finished his instruction and is he alone again I approach his given place with my gift of yellow bananas and I offer him my gratitude for the words that he did speak about Saramis at her ceremony for the Silenced and I ask him if I may be allowed to seek his guidance.

I look into his eyes and I recall what I have been told of the many cycles of darkness and light long since passed after Wise Loomis was an infant when he and his brother Loomas - son of Loomat - were chosen to be mentored by my father Tomag - son of Tomak - who was then only a youngster himself.

Tomag was much admired and respected by the sons of Loomat and since he was Silenced and passed from the troupe it has been Wise Loomis as the troupe's Spirit-Guide who has given me much help and has shown me special favour.

I feel tall as I stand before Wise Loomis because the many cycles of darkness and light long since passed that he has been a member of the troupe have given his shorter form a slight stoop and as he stands before me now I look down into his dignified face and I see that his polite grin is fringed with a beard of grey hairs which match the grey fur growing in his long mane.

Wise Loomis has kindly black eyes which sparkle from always being wet and when any member of the troupe looks deep into them they can have no doubt about his wisdom that is great enough for him to have been appointed the leader

of the council of Elders had he not already displayed the special gifts needed for the difficult duties and the great responsibilities of being chosen as the Spirit-Guide of the troupe.

Even before his ceremony of adulthood the youngest son of Loomat was named Novice Loomis because he was apprenticed to Wise Sergis who was then the Spirit-Guide of the troupe and when Wise Sergis was Silenced it was the grown and much experienced Novice Loomis who was then commanded to take the title of Wise Loomis in his turn and he now has an authority on the Raft second only to Lord Simotan.

Wise Loomis looks back at me and he gently pats me on the arm.

“Is it for your grief that you seek my guidance Tomas - son of Tomag? - for Saramis - daughter of Saramo - is much missed by all of us in the troupe.” He says this quietly and with such a sadness in his voice that my feelings of grief return to me.

I nod and say to him.

“You speak truly Wise Loomis. We all miss her now that she is passed from the troupe and I pray that our gift to the cold and hungry sharks has brought us merit with the Spirit of the Ocean.” And then I pause because I suddenly regret having come to visit his given place.

The words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors tell us that it is the duty of every monkey to speak the truth and that the welfare of all upon the Raft must not be challenged by the suppression of important matter which the wise and revered ones of the troupe must always hear.

“But it is not for our loss that I have come to speak with you Wise Loomis....” I say slowly.

“...I seek guidance for what happened to me when the last cycle of darkness just passed was upon the Raft and I need your wisdom to tell me if I have offended the Spirits so that they seek to test me.”

Wise Loomis seems distracted as if the chatter in his head is still speaking to him of the passing of Saramis.

“I am afraid.” I then blurt out surprising both of us and Wise Loomis immediately looks concerned with his black eyes shining as they search my face for the purpose behind my words.

“Tomas - son of Tomag - come and be comfortable with me and tell me why you are afraid.”

We squat down together and he offers me a yellow banana which I take while



the chatter in my head tells me that surely I must keep nothing from him despite how wrong it sounds and I pray that he will not be shocked and disappointed with what I say to him.

“Wise Loomis. I was awakened when the last cycle of darkness since passed was upon the Raft...” I begin boldly.

“...and I saw the Moon as it journeyed the darkened Sky.”

Wise Loomis looks puzzled and anxious but he does not move to speak and so I continue because it seems that the words themselves want to be spoken.

“Wise Loomis. All were sleeping around me and the Raft was different with the light from the Moon shining down upon it. I was afraid. There was chatter in my head where only the dream-pictures of the Spirits should be...and then a dark figure approached me...I believe it was a Spirit sent from another place for it did speak to me of the destiny of the troupe and it did speak to me of a prophesy...”

And then I stop because Wise Loomis holds up the creased leathery palm of his hand which he almost puts across my mouth.

His tail is up and it is twitching from side to side.

“Why are you saying this to me Tomas - son of Tomag...” He pleads as his eyes frantically search mine.

“...none of this can be real because the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors do not allow any of what you say to be real. Why do you speak of such a falsity?” Wise Loomis has the look of one who is in pain.

“We are surely told that the Moon travels across the Sky in the cycle of darkness but none may see it make the journey...” He adds.

“...for it is then that we sleep Tomas. The Spirit of the Moon demands it of us. You are mistaken.”

“But it was so real.” I declare as I close my eyes and I picture the dark figure as it stood before me in the pale blue light from the Moon and I wait while Wise Loomis is surely searching for the right words with which to reply.

After a pause he says very quietly.

“Tomas - son of Tomag - is there more to tell...?” And even with my eyes still closed I can sense that he has leaned forward so that his whisper is not lost to me.

“...and be sure that none but me hears what you have to say for your words carry danger for you. I pray that you are no more than just overburdened and your reckoning has become distracted.”

“Wise Loomis. I must have been sleeping...” I say softly as I try to order the chatter in my head.

“...because I recall being awakened to see that the Moon was high above the far horizon... and I was afraid that its Spirit was coming to Silence me...but instead another Spirit appeared upon the Raft and it did speak of a prophesy that foretells of the destiny of the troupe...and it did say that I have powers that are greater than my fellows.”

The chatter in my head tells me that I have not told well the news of what did happen to me and when I open my eyes I find I am looking closely into the scowling face of Wise Loomis.

He shakes his head and says.

“Tomas - son of Tomag - I was guided by Wise Sergis before me that as the generations of our troupe are birthed and then become Silenced there may be one or more monkeys amongst us that prove to be gifted. It can only be these few who will truly see what others can not see and only these few who will truly hear what others can not hear.” And he gently pats my leg as I close my eyes again.

“Others...” He continues.

“...will say that they have this gift but instead they are lost from themselves in falsity and confusion and they must be dealt with according to the laws that are spoken of by the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors. Be most careful Tomas - son of Tomag - not to speak again of what you have told me for there are none that will agree with you and only I that will judge you with favour.”

Behind my closed eyes I can still picture the dark figure as it stared at me while I was cowering down next to Dolfis in the gloom of the cycle of darkness and I can hear a voice even as the chatter in my head is telling me that I am not recalling a falsity and that I am not confused.

I have been feeling a little unsteady with my eyes closed and I sway as the picture of the dark figure in my head suddenly becomes very clear and very real.

“Wise Loomis. You must listen to what the Spirit did say to me...” I hear myself tell him.

“...and give your guidance as to its meaning for it is surely of great importance to the welfare of the troupe.” And before he can refuse me I start to speak.

“There is a greater wisdom beyond your own and you will know fear as you

come to learn what is already falsely spoken when the many that you have not yet seen come to seek the same rewards that you were the first to receive.” And as I speak I can hear a voice that truly does not sound like my own and yet it comes from my mouth as it recalls without faltering the words that the dark figure did say to me.

“You must deny the wisdom of those that live not to reach the destination that you seek because the failure of your journey will not be witnessed by them when you all discover that your final home lies beyond where is now the water all around you.”

I feel that a strong hand has gripped my arm as if to stop me speaking but all other sounds around me have become as nothing while the voice continues to say its words of the prophesy.

“If those that seek my guidance become lost from my wisdom then your destiny too will be lost and so will be the joys and the rewards that will come in the sharing of all that Creation can offer.”

“Tomas...Tomas...” I then hear as Wise Loomis shakes my arm with much force.

“...open your eyes for I fear that you are surely lost from yourself.”

The voice of Wise Loomis is close and urgent and I blink my eyes open to find that I am staring into his face which is only the length of a hand away from my own and the wind from his words is ruffling the fur on my cheek.

There is a look of panic in his eyes which chases away the picture of the dark figure from my head and I am no longer unsteady.

I can not help but to grin helplessly at Wise Loomis while I order the chatter in my head and I question what did just happen.

I feel puzzled and embarrassed and so I quickly ask Wise Loomis to excuse my unruly behaviour and then I plead with him to forgive me for troubling him with my foolishness.

I tell him that my grief has surely caused me to become confused and without control and as I stand up and I prepare to leave him I say that I will try to find my true self again by walking the long familiar pathway that leads around the edge of the Raft where I will comfort myself with the sight and the sound of the waves and the ripples in the waters of the mighty Ocean which is the Raft’s gentle wake.

Staring closely into my eyes he tells me that I should go and find Dolfis who will better comfort me and that I must be careful not to speak to her or to any of

our fellows about what I have just said because to repeat such dangerous falsities will be to threaten the harmony of the troupe and to put myself in danger of punishment.

I hurry away to the nearest place at the edge of the Raft where I can see clearly across the vast flat expanse of the mighty Ocean to where the blue of its calm waters meets the blue of the clear Sky at the far horizon and then I slowly and quietly start to walk.

As I progress around the Raft I do not stop to natter with any of my fellows that I meet and instead I try to organise the chatter in my head which is telling me that I should be guided by Wise Loomis and that I should not speak again of the things that I did say to him and I determine I am mistaken and confused and that surely there was no dark figure that was a Spirit sent to speak with me.

I tell myself that surely I did somehow recall a fragment of the dream-pictures of the Spirits which I should not have been allowed to witness and that surely the Spirits were gaming with each other and making fun by speaking of a prophesy about the destiny of the troupe.

The further I walk the more ordered does the chatter in my head become and I determine that I have been very foolish to speak to Wise Loomis about something so false and dangerous and I pray that Wise Loomis favours me by not speaking of it to Lord Simotan or to the council of Elders.

“How could I let myself become so distracted?” I say out loud to the far horizon ahead of the Raft and to the first of the small white Clouds that are forming above it and I recall that Wise Loomis did say that I should seek out my loyal mate Dolfis and find comfort with her.

I return to our chosen place where Dolfis is waiting for me and together we share the coming of the Cloud-rain and then when we have groomed each other and the Sun is passed its high point in the Sky I ask Dolfis if she will stay with me until the cycle of light ends which she is pleased to do because she is still filled with the joy that our earlier mating has given her.

I do not speak to her of what did happen to me and she does not ask me about my visit to Wise Loomis but I sense that not only has she determined how distracted I am but that she is also doing what she can to comfort and support me.

As the Sun continues its journey across the Sky I become anxious about the approach of the cycle of darkness because I fear that I might witness again some fragment of the dream-pictures of the Spirits but when the Moon replaces the

Sun in the Sky I sleep undisturbed and when the next cycle of light begins I do not recall anything that I should not and I give thanks to the great and wise God Gonamana.

Dolfis is full of joy when she awakens to find that I am no longer distracted and as we enjoy the early warmth from the Sun as it begins its journey we feed and we natter and we determine what our duties will be before the coming of the Cloud-rain.

Then to our great surprise we greet Wise Loomis who has come to visit us at our chosen place and because he must have started his walk to reach here so very early we offer him yellow bananas as we tell him of the honor that he gives us and then we ask him to be comfortable with us so we can all natter together.

We squat down and we politely share the news of the troupe until our near neighbour Gordan - son of Gordak - along with his mate Jilet - daughter of Jilit - come to visit also and they approach us along the stepping places that cross the bed of yellow bananas that separates their chosen place from ours.

Wise Loomis quickly suggests that Gordan and Jilet take Dolfis somewhere else on the Raft so that he and I can speak together about something important which is not for any others to hear and when they have gone from us he grins at me and he says.

“Tomas. You look and sound again like the son of Tomag that has the great respect of the troupe.”

He is not speaking so loud that any of our fellows around us might hear and he pats my leg and stares into my face as we squat down close to each other.

The chatter in my head has already determined why Wise Loomis has come to visit me and I feel shame that I have been a worry to him.

“Oh Wise Loomis...” I reply lowering my head.

“...I have been foolish and I will not speak again of my sorry confusion.” But he lifts up my chin with one of his thin bony fingers so that I look into his eyes.

“Then there were no more visits from mysterious dark Spirits when the Moon last journeyed the darkened Sky?” He teases and I shake my head not only with the regret that I did not wait before seeking his advice about something that I was so surely mistaken about but also because I am angry with myself because Wise Loomis now must regard me with some suspicion.

“Tomas. The Troupe-Lore is all that we have to tell us of the ways and the demands of the great and wise God Gonamana - praise Him...and of his obedient Spirit servants. You are skilled with this spoken tradition and you have

long since taught our youngsters that each domain has a Spirit that dutifully orders and maintains it.” He speaks slowly and with much seriousness.

“The Sky. The waters of the mighty Ocean. The Sun. The Clouds and the Moon. The Troupe-Lore speaks of no other.” Then he leans forward so that he can be sure that only I will hear.

“Tomas. When my brother Loomas and I were still youngsters we were the favourites of the greatly respected Spirit-Guide Wise Sergis. He advised the revered Alpha Lord Simodek and the council of Elders that Loomas and I were both gifted...” I see Wise Loomis slowly wink an eye at me before he then says.

“...but because I chose not to Bond with a mate it was me and not Loomas that was apprenticed to Wise Sergis and my gift was nurtured in all the cycles of light that then since passed when I was commanded to be his Novice.”

I nod my head without saying anything.

“I have not yet spoken of this to Lord Simotan...” He continues.

“...but I sense that you too have a gift that can be nurtured Tomas - son of Tomag...” And as Wise Loomis sees the look of surprise on my face he signals to me that he has not yet finished what he has to say.

“...but if you become foolish and confused again you will be greatly harmed.” His hand grips my leg and he squeezes it hard.

“Tomas. You must never speak of that which is not first spoken of by the words the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors...” And he narrows his black eyes before he adds.

“...for those that do shall be named a Heretic.”

Hearing that word spoken makes me feel cold and very afraid and a shiver runs down my back as the hairs of my fur rise.

I quickly assure Wise Loomis that I am honored and thankful that he has again guided me so wisely and so generously and before he takes his leave of me we natter politely once again about when he was Novice Loomis and about the instruction that he was given by Wise Sergis on the disciplines that are needed to nurture and control a gift that is found in a member of the troupe.

And then when he has gone from my chosen place I pick some yellow bananas and I begin to feed but I determine that the words of Wise Loomis did truly find a home within me and I vow not to recall again the dream-pictures where I mistakenly saw the dark Spirit who said that I had powers that were greater than my fellows and who trusted me with a prophesy about the destiny of the troupe and I also determine that only one who is truly lost from

themselves would risk a dreadful punishment by believing in such falsities.  
Or one who is truly a Heretic.

### **3. PREPARATION**



### 3. I

There are very many cycles of darkness and light that pass while the Raft continues its sacred journey across the calm flat waters of the mighty Ocean as it carries the troupe slowly but surely towards the promised destination beyond the far horizon and we remain humble with gratitude that the Spirits continue to order the domains of Creation around us with such care.

We say our prayers of thanks for the Sun and the Moon that do not fail us as each in their turn they journey the Sky above the Raft and we do not fail to receive the waters of the Cloud-rain that brings us joy and also nourishment to both the troupe and to the bounty of yellow bananas that grow upon the surface of our precious home.

My fellows and I thrive and we never doubt the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors that are so sacred and when the Spirits choose to Silence one of us we give our thanks for the fellowship that we had and we leave behind their cold flesh to make merit with the Spirit of the Ocean and to fulfill our duty to the cold and hungry sharks who are our tireless companions.

We are often all filled with joy when we celebrate a new much anticipated ceremony of Bonding when a female member of the troupe is taken by a male and they are granted the enduring liberty and duty to mate with each other and in answer to our prayers the troupe is gifted with the birthing of many new young ones which fulfills our purpose as monkeys and His chosen ones.

Lord Simotan continues to enjoy the comfort and the support of his loyal Consort as he dutifully oversees the order and the observances that we all faithfully trust and respect and his eldest son Simolas now displays the strength and the wisdom that any growing Alpha-to-be must show having already celebrated his ceremony of Adulthood.

Even with the greying of his fur the wisdom of Wise Loomis continues to grow and he patiently advises us all with his considered guidance about the

mysteries of the Spirits and it fills me with joy to recall just how very proud he was when at last his direction helped Dolfis to birth me a healthy new young one of my own.

My son has since grown enough so that he no longer needs to feed on the milk that his mother was more than able to give him and Dolfis being so completely fulfilled now did accompany me with much pride when at the ceremony of Acceptance we presented our new youngster to the troupe and we named him Tofas - son of Tomas.

Despite the welcome distraction of now having Tofas I have not been slow in learning from my wise and revered fellows more about our given Troupe-Lore and since I became an Adept at speaking the words and telling the stories of the ancestors I have also been apprenticed to Wise Loomis as his Novice so that I am now called upon as an authority on the laws and the ancient wisdom of the troupe and I strive with much desire to become wiser in all matters of Spirit guidance.

And so there is surely no more joy that could be granted to me here upon the Raft for I now have the esteem of my fellows together with a growing influence over the conduct of the troupe as well as a loyal mate and a precious son and because this is all truly the gift of the great and wise God Gonamana I give thanks for His care and His generosity and His wisdom. Praise Him indeed.

“Novice Tomas...” Says Wise Loomis as I arrive at his given place with the Sun’s early heat on my back.

“...here is Monatus - daughter of Monaglo - that awaits you. She has come to me for guidance about the Bonding that she soon will make with her given mate but I want that you speak with her because your instruction is growing ever more subtle and wise.”

Monatus is still a favourite of mine and she has grown to become both a clever and a very admired young adult whose distinctive scent has made her much favoured by the maturing males of the troupe that are her fellows.

“You are welcome Monatus - daughter of Monaglo...” I say as I grin at her.

“...it will give me joy to guide you so tell me what you need of me.”

She bows her head respectfully and she places a gift of yellow bananas at my feet.

“Novice Tomas...” She says as she straightens up to blink shyly at me with her large dark eyes.

“...I have long waited to be Bonded and it is for Hadwin - son of Hadwik -

that I have been chosen. I have only now to be guided as to which of the Spirits will be the guardian to our mating because all other duties and responsibilities of Bonding have been taught to me.”

The chatter in my head tells me that this Bonding and the mating with it will be very pleasing to Hadwin - son of Hadwik - for Monatus has a form that arouses many and she has long since started her cycles of seed-blood.

“Be comfortable with me over here...” I say.

“...so that we do not distract Wise Loomis.”

And I lead Monatus to a place where we will not be overheard by any other members of the troupe.

We squat down together and she tells me about what she has already learned of the duties and the responsibilities that will be demanded of her as a loyal and faithful mate and I tell her that I will pray that when she is Bonded she will bring Hadwin much joy for all the cycles of light yet to pass.

Then I tell her that it is my guidance that the Spirit of the Sun is to be her mating-guardian and I tell her of the rituals and the prayers that will make merit with this Spirit so that it will bless her with a new young one growing in her belly.

She tells me that she is so very pleased that she has been chosen by the Spirit of the Sun and the chatter in my head recalls how Dolfis too was pleased when Wise Loomis told her before she Bonded with me that the Spirit of the Moon was to be the guardian of her mating.

“Novice Tomas...” Wise Loomis did say to me with a grin all those many cycles of darkness and light long since passed when he was first teaching me how I should guide the adult females about their mating-guardian.

“...when Dolfis came to me for guidance I determined that she was constant and that she had much that was hidden from me. I also saw that she brought calm to her fellows and that she would willingly perform her duties even when those around her needed to rest. From witnessing this I needed not a voice from the Spirits for me to instruct her that the Spirit of the Moon would be her mating-guardian.”

My natter with Monatus is soon finished and because she walks away with such a joyful grin after thanking me with great respect for my guidance Wise Loomis approaches me and questions what I did say to her.

I tell him of my instruction to her about the Spirit of the Sun choosing to be her mating-guardian and he nods wisely with a serious look on his face before

he then grins and pats my shoulder and tells me that I have learned well the subtleties of satisfying my fellows and that I will become a wise Spirit-Guide in my turn.

I tell him that I have a good teacher and that although I am his Novice that is willing to continue my duties I must leave his given place because I am soon expected to meet with my neighbours at a place near the front of the Raft where they await me together with their youngster and my precious son Tofas.

Wise Loomis winks his eye and he gives me his blessing before I hurry away with the chatter in my head telling me that I did not need a voice from the Spirits to tell me that Monatus - daughter of Monaglo - is always greeted with joy upon her arrival and that she will always bring warmth to her mate during the passing of each cycle of light when they are together and I grin to myself as I determine that by naming the Spirit of the Sun as her mating-guardian I did not make a mistake in my choice.

At a place some little distance from the front edge of the Raft where the waters of the mighty Ocean to one side of the Raft can be clearly seen stretching away to the far horizon I greet my neighbours Gordan - son of Gordak - and his mate Jilet - daughter of Jilit - and we squat down together to feed and to natter as we watch our youngsters Tofas and Jilan who play and game with each other amongst the beds of yellow bananas.

Dolfis has chosen not to be here with us for she is in another place with the females skilled and practiced in the ways of birthing because she desires greatly that in her turn she too will have their valuable wisdom and learning.

Gordan and I chose this place to meet because it is from here that the long straight lines of shallow waves and ripples can easily be seen on the surface of the waters of the mighty Ocean which are pushed out by the Raft as it journeys forward and which glint and sparkle in the light from the Sun.

There are many stories told by the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors that speak of the light from the Sun reflecting from this gently moving wake and how it endows the yellow bananas that grow at the front of the Raft with a special quality that brings health and joy to those that eat them and so this whole area that is blessed by this reflected light is where most members of the troupe like to visit and there many places along the narrow pathways for gathering with stepping places leading from them and into the surrounding beds of yellows bananas that make easier the picking of the precious yellow fruits.

Gordan and Jilet and I have chosen to gather in one of the many places that is

not so very near to the edge of the Raft because we do not want our youngsters to play where they are at risk of falling into the domain of the cold and hungry sharks but I see that many other of our fellows have gathered alongside the pathway that runs around the edge of the Raft so that they can listen to the gentle lapping sound of the waters of the mighty Ocean that wash up against the Raft's flattened front and sides.

Tofas and Jilan chase and gamble as together with some other youngsters they play their infant games far enough away from any danger while Gordan and Jilet and I enjoy the warmth from the Sun as we natter and exchange news and feed on the yellow bananas with the special quality.

Everything is harmonious and ordered as it should be until we suddenly hear Jilan cry out to her mother for help and her voice seems to reach us from a place amongst the beds of yellow bananas where she surely should be very safe.

Her cry quickly becomes a howl and Gordan and Jilet and I all jump up and start running along the narrow pathways towards where Jilan is truly in a great deal of distress.

Other members of the troupe that are nearby hear Jilan howl too and they begin to voice their alarm so that all too soon there is a loud yakking which quickly starts to spread across the front part of the Raft.

Gordan and Jilet are the first to reach Jilan and I am not far behind them with Tofas in my arms who I have gathered up on my way there.

We find that Jilan is halfway along the stepping places leading into one of the beds of yellow bananas and she is howling because she is stuck there looking very much shorter than she should be with only the top part of her body to be seen above the layers of precious yellow fruits that are sprouting there.

Gordan and Jilet are puzzled and frightened and so I tell them to pull aside the yellow bananas surrounding this stepping place and when they do we see that Jilan is joined to the surface fabric of the Raft by her thighs and her legs and feet are no longer there beneath her.

The chatter in my head tells me that this truly can not be so but by looking closer I then see that her legs are covered by something that I have not before witnessed and that they have not gone and surely can still be seen.

I determine that her legs are surrounded by a strange darkness that seems to have a place beyond the surface of the Raft.

Jilet sees what I am seeing and she lets out a mighty howl as she reaches down and wraps her arms around the frightened young Jilan and lifts her up and

out from amongst the yellow bananas.

Jilan seems to be safe because her legs and feet are hanging below her where they should be but the strange darkness from where we took them remains within the surface fabric of the Raft looking empty and menacing.

Gordan is without words and he is staring at me with his mouth open as if he is preparing to question me but I can not say anything to him because I am without words too and the chatter in my head is disordered.

Others of the troupe crowd along the pathways to question us about what has happened and the increasing clamour of their natter adds to the sound of Jilan's howling to make a noisy commotion.

I determine that it will be from me that the others here will seek guidance because I am the Novice apprenticed to Wise Loomis and so I look down at the surface of the Raft where Jilan was before stuck and I see that the empty and menacing darkness surrounded by yellow bananas where a stepping place should be seen is what looks to be a mouth.

The mouth is open so that it forms some sort of hole or breach in the surface fabric of the Raft and it is big enough to have swallowed the feet and the legs of a slight youngster.

I point to it but I do not have any right words to describe what I am looking at because something like this has never before been seen in the smooth unbroken surface of the Raft beneath our feet.

My fellows that are nearest to me look down at what I am pointing to and they start to cry out that we should all flee from this place of evil and so there is then a sudden crush of bodies along the stepping places and on the pathways as many individuals push and shove each other either to approach and to witness too what has been seen here or to depart from this shocking place in a hurry towards the safety of one of the many gathering places.

I take it upon myself to bring some order to the confusion and I call out as loudly as I can manage to all those around me that we should all slowly and calmly step back so that we can move safely away from this place of danger.

News of the breach and then natter of a huge disaster that has befallen us spreads quickly across the Raft and it is well before the Sun has reached its high point in the Sky that Lord Simotan and Wise Loomis together with many members of the council of Elders arrive to join the mob that has already gathered to discover why there is such a panic upon the Raft and why so many members of the troupe are calling upon the great and wise God Gonamana to

save them.

“Novice Tomas...” Lord Simotan demands of me as he and the wise and revered ones of the troupe make their way past the many frightened and bewildered of our fellows that jostle about along the pathways leading to the gathering place nearest to the breach.

I am with Gordan standing apart from the crowds and together we are keeping the others away from the bed of yellow bananas where the danger has been discovered.

Standing away from the disturbance is Jilet who is rocking Jilan gently in her arms and Dolfis is there too who has arrived to give comfort to Tofas.

“...what in the name of the Spirits is happening here?” Lord Simotan adds.

The chatter in my head can give me no true answer to that question and so I say.

“Lord Simotan. Wise Loomis and revered Elders of the council. We have witnessed something here that does not easily explain itself. Young Jilan has found that which can not be and she has been tested by it. Over there...” And I point in the direction of the breach.

“...there is... not Raft... where Raft should be. I have no words but that the Raft has now what looks to be a mouth which tried to eat young Jilan as I would eat a yellow banana.”

“Show me.” Says Lord Simotan after a long pause and a lot of puzzled staring. And then he adds.

“Come with me Wise Loomis. You others stay here.”

I step carefully along the pathway to lead Lord Simotan and Wise Loomis to the stepping places that approach the place where the breach has appeared.

“Wise Loomis this is mysterious indeed.” Says Lord Simotan with his broad jutting brow creasing into a frown as he arrives at the breach and he sees the hole.

He waits as Wise Loomis bravely squats down and takes a closer look.

“Wise Loomis. Tell us how can it be...” Says Lord Simotan stroking his beard anxiously.

“...that the Raft suffers like this? It is breached. Nothing like this is spoken of by the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors and so this is surely wrong and a threat to our harmony. What is it that we should do? Can it be that the Spirits give us a sign...?”

And then with his eyes opening wider he says slowly.

“...or an Omen?” And they stare at each other in silence.

“Novice Tomas. Tell us again...” Then says Wise Loomis turning his black shining eyes on me.

But I determine no more of what he is saying because his words seem to float around me as if they have come from far away and I feel unsteady as I picture before me a tall dark figure with smooth black flesh and large pale eyes.

“Novice Tomas?” I then hear a voice saying but because the chatter in my head seems so distant I can not determine if the voice comes from Wise Loomis or from the dark figure whose form is now clear and very real as it stands before me.

I try to fight against the darkness that is now growing inside my head...

...and then it is as if I am waking at the start of a cycle of light when the chatter returns to my head and the dream-pictures of the Spirits become lost and beyond recall.

“Novice Tomas. Novice Tomas!” I can now hear Lord Simotan calling out.

One of his strong arms is holding me upright and his muzzle is close to mine so that the wind from his words is in my face.

“Novice Tomas. Stop this NOW!” It does not sound like the voice of Wise Loomis but he has also taken hold of me and he is shaking me very roughly.

His voice is very angry.

Lord Simotan looks at Wise Loomis and he says.

“Wise Loomis. What troubles Novice Tomas? I can not allow him to say such things. He speaks of our sacred journey and that it will fail and also of our destiny that will be lost.”

I am still feeling unsteady even as my belly tightens with fear when I recall how I spoke with Wise Loomis all those very many cycles of darkness and light long since passed about how I saw the Moon as it travelled the darkened Sky and about a dark figure that I named a Spirit who spoke to me a prophesy and now those same words are again so familiar to the chatter in my head.

My chest is thumping and my throat is dry and I determine that if Lord Simotan and Wise Loomis were not holding on to me then I would surely fall down onto the surface of the Raft.

Wise Loomis says something which I do not hear and he takes me from the grasp of Lord Simotan before helping me to stumble out of the bed of yellow bananas and away along the narrow pathway towards a nearby gathering place.

“Come with me...” Wise Loomis whispers through his clenched teeth as he



leads me away.

“...and do not speak further until you are rested” And turning back he calls out.

“Lord Simotan. I fear that Novice Tomas has been shocked by what he has seen and that it has overburdened him. But worry not for it is surely in my power to help him. Let us keep the troupe from this place so that none of the others become troubled and then we must gather the wise and revered ones of the troupe together so that we might question the purpose of what has happened here.”

I am glad that Wise Loomis has taken command of me and I keep my eyes looking down at my feet as I let him lead me past the members of the council of Elders who are nattering quietly with each other and also past an anxious mob of my fellows that surely stare at me curiously and fearfully.

Then I find myself in the arms of Dolfis who hugs me and comforts me and I try to grin reassuringly at Tofas who is whimpering while he clings tightly to the fur on her back.

I am too ashamed to speak but Wise Loomis says calmly.

“Dolfis - daughter of Dolfat. Go with Novice Tomas and comfort him until he finds himself again. Let him not speak if he tells you things that make you afraid. Leave us now and may you go with the blessing of the great and wise God Gonamana - praise Him.”

Dolfis and I each point a finger to the Sky and respond as we should and then as we walk away I glance round to see that Lord Simotan is commanding the troupe.

Sentries are being commanded to guard and to isolate the bed of yellow bananas where the breach has appeared and the chief Elder Parus - son of Patus - is speaking with Lord Simotan and is surely arranging to gather the wise and revered ones of the troupe together so that answers might be determined and the crisis explained.

Slowly I am led back to our chosen place by Dolfis where she asks me about what did happen when I was with Lord Simotan and why she was warned by Wise Loomis that I might say things which would frighten her and she tells me that some members of the troupe heard me speak mysteriously about the failure of the sacred journey and as she waits for me to answer she gently runs her fingers through my mane.

I look into her eyes and I determine that because she is my loyal mate she

deserves to hear everything about the dark figure that before now I believed was a Spirit and how it has troubled me again and then the chatter in my head tells me that she and I will surely soon be questioned by the wise and revered ones of the troupe who will then certainly punish me because I have no doubt now that I was heard speaking again the words about the destiny of the troupe that Wise Loomis did tell me were a dangerous falsity.

And so I begin by telling Dolfis of how in the many cycles of darkness and light long since passed and before the birthing of Tofas I somehow recalled some small part of the dream-pictures of the Spirits which made me believe that I awoke when the cycle of darkness was upon the Raft and I tell her about a prophesy that was spoken to me and how a dark figure which I determined was a Spirit had entrusted me with it.

At the start of my story Dolfis remains quiet but when I tell her that I then went to Wise Loomis and asked for his guidance about speaking with an unnamed Spirit which is not spoken of by the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors she moans and she closes her eyes which become wet so that they drip with water.

Then I tell her that Wise Loomis refused to listen to me and that he did say that I had spoken a falsity which he instructed me to suppress.

I see Dolfis open her eyes briefly as if she is pleading with me to tell her that there is no more bad news she must hear but I can only add that my foolishness returned as I showed Lord Simotan the breach in the surface of the Raft and I saw again the dark figure and I must have spoken again its words so that both Wise Loomis and Lord Simotan did hear me recalling the prophesy.

“I did not want this.” I say angrily and Dolfis hugs herself while she gently rocks backwards and forwards.

But then she stops and she looks at me calmly.

“My precious Tomas. It can not be easy for you to bear your gifts. And the duties and the responsibilities of your apprenticeship must be burdensome indeed. But surely there is a purpose to what has happened to you. Is it that the breach in the Raft and the return of the dark Spirit that you saw are somehow joined?” And she puts her arms around me and tightly clings to me before she says in a whisper that betrays her desperation.

“...can it be that the prophesy foretells us about the Omens that the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors say will sign to the troupe that we need to prepare ourselves for the coming of the end of our sacred journey.”

I hold Dolfis against me and I feel her sobbing as I gently tell her that until we determine what the truth can be then none of what I did say and what I have done will be easily explained and that if I am duly challenged by the wise and revered ones of the troupe then surely there will be much trouble for me in the cycles of light yet to pass.

In the silence that follows we cling to each other even harder and the dark shadow of the Cloud-shade reaches the Raft.

### 3. 2

After the Cloud-rain has fallen and as the Sun travels down from its midpoint in the Sky towards the far horizon Dolfis and I stay quietly together in our chosen place until a message arrives telling me that if I am recovered enough from my distraction then I should go and meet with Wise Loomis at the place where the breach in the surface of the Raft has been found.

I assure Dolfis that I will take care of myself and I hurry off along the pathways that lead to the bed of yellow bananas that has given the troupe so much anguish and when I approach it I see squatting there the sentries that have been posted all around to protect the troupe from the newly found hidden danger.

The nearest of the sentries respond to my arrival with caution and they look at me with suspicion when I greet them politely but they do not stop me and I walk over to where Wise Loomis is standing alone amongst the yellow bananas.

He is anxiously tugging at his grey beard as he stares intently at the place where the breach has appeared and I see that he looks tired as we greet each other.

“Novice Tomas. It is good that you have your strength again and you are able to meet with me here...” He says.

“...for I have come from a gathering at the place of the Alpha where the members of the council of Elders have spoken much about what did happen since the start of this cycle of light.” And then he looks at me carefully and says.

“I told them that you were not able to join us and many of our fellows there did say that you would not have been welcome. You have lost a lot of trust and respect Novice Tomas.” And he searches my face with a look of sadness in his dark shining eyes before he turns back to stare at the stepping places where the breach is hiding amongst the yellow bananas sprouting around it.

And then without waiting for me to reply he says.

“I was praying that the Raft would be whole again when I returned here but it is not so. What say you of this damage to the Raft that you brought to the eyes of the troupe and which overburdened you so very much with its arrival?”

I determine that I can hear something in his words that should make me afraid and I too look towards the breach.

“Wise Loomis.” I say trying to order the chatter in my head.

“Because nothing like this has before been spoken of or witnessed then it is surely for us to heed the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors that tell us of the end of our sacred journey and its coming that will be foretold by mysterious and unexplained changes they name as Omens. Perhaps we should call the finding of this breach to be such an Omen.”

“Many did say the same at the gathering Novice Tomas...” He replies.

“...and when Lord Simotan repeated what he recalled of the words that you spoke about the failure of the sacred journey and about how the destiny of the troupe will be lost I was questioned about your gifts and about your ability to voice guidance from the Spirits.”

I do not like what I am hearing but I say nothing because he then says carefully.

“I told them that you did not...intervene...for any of the Spirits and that you were lost from yourself. I also said that...in your anxiety...you could not rule your tongue...” He fidgets nervously.

“...but I did not tell them of what you and I did speak of before you were chosen to be my apprentice and for that I risk much because I am afraid that you could become a danger to the troupe...Novice Tomas...if you do not learn to control your gift.”

Wise Loomis rubs his eyes as if to soothe a great pain in his head and with his jaws clenched firmly shut he adds.

“Why did you speak so to Lord Simotan and risk being punished so dreadfully?”

I do not want to be false with Wise Loomis and I truly want only what is best for the troupe and so I determine that I must explain to him what the chatter in my head is telling me.

“Wise Loomis...” I begin slowly.

“...I came to you many cycles of darkness and light long since passed and I did say that while all others of the troupe were sleeping I somehow witnessed a dark figure and I spoke of how it wanted me to learn of a prophesy that told

about the destiny of the troupe.” But the chatter in my head is suddenly difficult to control because it starts to tell me things that I have not before determined and these new things make me feel worthy.

“We both agreed that to awaken in the cycle of darkness was a falsity...” I continue.

“...and so none of what I did say could have been real. But the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors do not tell us about the form of the Spirits. Can it be that our sleeping heads see them as dark figures that shine and have no tail...?” My head is full of new words that bring me a feeling of joy.

“...and because the Spirits choose to hide their dream-pictures from us...then perhaps it was also their choice to allow me to recall what I witnessed when sleeping...as a preparation for the Omen to be discovered upon the Raft.”

Wise Loomis is looking very anxious and he moves to speak but because I have no doubt that I should not keep hidden from him any of what the chatter in my head is now saying to me I sign that I have more to say.

“Can it be that the words that you did hear with my voice are not a falsity and that I truly have powers that are greater than my fellows...so that I have been chosen to foretell the destiny of the troupe...? I am speaking too quickly for Wise Loomis to interrupt.

“...or can it be that the breach in the surface of the Raft is something other than an Omen telling us to prepare for our arrival at the promised destination beyond the far horizon...? And even though I pause while I listen to the chatter that is loud within my head I see that Wise Loomis does not now mean to stop me from speaking until I have finished.

“...for perhaps we are being told of a different destiny that none of us have yet determined.” And because their home within me is easy to find I carefully begin to recall the words of prophesy.

“This is somehow the greater wisdom beyond our own that we now fear as we come to learn what is already falsely spoken...” I try to make the words sound worthy for Wise Loomis but he shakes his head and he looks at me with sorrow in his eyes.

“...for we must deny the wisdom of those that live not to reach the destination that we seek...” I continue.

“...because the failure of our journey will not be witnessed by them when we all discover that our final home lies beyond where is now the water all around us.”

And then the chatter in my head becomes suddenly ordered as I determine the truth of the voice that has spoken to me.

“Wise Loomis. A Spirit has surely chosen me...” I tell him.

“...and it has told me what all of us upon the Raft must hear. We truly must be afraid that our destiny will soon be lost?”

I want to say more so that my guidance will serve to save the troupe from the coming disaster that only I can see but a feeling of pity stops my voice as the chatter in my head then tells me that surely my fellows are all infants at play upon the Raft even as I enjoy having the worthiness of an all powerful God or a Spirit that is all wise.

Wise Loomis scowls as he turns away from my silence and my grinning face and he shakes his head as he looks down towards the breach in the surface of the Raft and then up and away across the calm blue waters of the mighty Ocean to the far horizon ahead.

He seems to be struggling with the chatter in his head just as I am struggling with mine but before I can speak of my guidance to the troupe he turns back to addresses me formally in the old way before the start of my apprenticeship.

“Tomas - son of Tomag...” And I feel a great pain tighten my belly as my hope of making him hear of the danger that I sense deep within myself is suddenly gone from me just as my given title has also been taken.

“...you must no longer attend me as my Novice. You have become lost and you will only bring harm to the troupe if you do not suppress your belief in the voice of a Spirit that is a falsity. I must speak with Lord Simotan about what I have determined and I must guide you now to act with caution.”

Then he reaches out and touches my arm gently.

“Tomas - I am truly sorry.”

The chatter in my head tells me that his judgment is only what his duty demands and that I should not be surprised that he has spoken it to me but to hear it said by one who I admire so much leaves me without any feeling of worthiness and it shocks me into silence.

Then I am too ashamed even to look at Wise Loomis and so I turn and I walk away from him only to find that my legs are shaking and my eyes are filled with water.

I stumble along the nearest pathway with heavy aimless steps and with nothing but fear and regret to comfort me I find that I am crossing the front of the Raft with no plan about what I should do next.

I walk slowly and without speaking with any of my fellows that I meet on my way and it is after I have journeyed almost to the side edge of the Raft that the chatter in my head starts to question why no member of the troupe has offered me a greeting as I pass them by even though the news of my dismissal and disgrace can not have reached their ears so soon.

Instead my fellows have just silently stared at me or they have whispered quietly together when I approached them along the pathways and so I determine that surely what did happen to me before now when I was with Lord Simotan at the place where the breach was discovered must have been witnessed by some of my fellows and the matter about what I did say about the destiny of the troupe has surely spread across the Raft.

I tell myself that if the news is that I boldly spoke of the failure of the sacred journey and the loss of our promised destination then my fellows must surely all be fearful and distrusting of me which is why they have chosen to avoid my companionship.

I am too distracted to regard this foolish behaviour of those around me and I approach the side edge of the Raft where there is a view down onto the waters of the mighty Ocean below where the light from the Sun glinting and sparkling from the Raft's wake can be clearly seen.

This view has always before cheered me greatly but now I feel too sad for it to bring me any joy and as I stand watching the gentle ripples spread out from the side of the Raft I am suddenly overwhelmed by a feeling of loneliness and I determine that I want to go and find my faithful Dolfis who will give me the comfort that I truly need.

The chatter in my head then tells me that she too will need comfort when she hears that Wise Loomis has dismissed me from my duties as his Novice and so I determine that I must set off to find her without delay and I start to pray that she is not told the news of my disgrace by the matter of the troupe before I am able to seek her out.

I want to take with me as a gift to Dolfis some of the precious yellow fruits with the special quality that she likes to taste and so before I set off I carefully step into the nearest bed of yellow bananas where I stoop to pick some that look especially heavy and ripe.

As I lift the first of them up I see that there is not another layer of yellow bananas growing beneath them and I also see that the short green growing stalks from which the lower layers should be sprouting are bare and exposed as they



grow up from the surface fabric of the Raft.

This shocks me and I want to quickly replace what I have just picked because the chatter in my head tells me that these frail green infant stalks must truly be very fragile being without the covering of small hard infant fruits which should be there to protect them.

Despite my anxiety I tell myself that I must not delay in calling out to my fellows around me to ask if I am the only one in the troupe to have witnessed this new and worrying sight but I quickly recall how they now treat me and I am afraid that they will only respond badly to anything that I say.

Then as I squat down and I try to determine what I should do for the best I hear a loud and urgent cry coming from an adult male who is feeding in a bed of yellow bananas nearby and it is Guyman - son of Guymas - and he has started to howl and to wave his long hairy arms up and down because he has just discovered another hole.

An even deeper breach in the surface fabric of the Raft.

### 3. 3

It is only after the troupe discovers that there are many other similar breaches to be found across the surface of the Raft and also after much natter amongst the wise and revered ones of the troupe about what is happening to our precious home that Lord Simotan commands that the breaches are surely the will of the great and wise God Gonamana and that they have surely been sent to us as Omens that the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors speak of as foretelling the coming of the end of the sacred journey and which should prepare those travelling upon the Raft for their arrival at the promised destination beyond the far horizon.

And because of that command from our Alpha a great excitement spreads across the Raft and much arouses the troupe as they quickly start to believe that they are truly the blessed of all the chosen ones and that it will be themselves that will witness what all other generations of monkeys before them have been denied.

Upon seeing the agitation all around him Lord Simotan has to calm and then warn the troupe that he will not allow any loss of discipline or any shirking of duties which would surely invite the wrath of the great and wise God Gonamana Himself.

Unfortunately for me an earlier command from Lord Simotan has already informed the troupe that I - Tomas - son of Tomag - no longer have the duties or the authority of one who is apprenticed to the Spirit-Guide and all respect shown to me by my fellows is now gone.

There is much angry natter that tells of me being lost from myself which continues to spread in awed whispers as it is told and then retold across the Raft and it warns my fellows that I am a threat to the completion of the sacred journey because I am controlled by a dark and powerful Spirit that brings forces of confusion and harm to the troupe.

And so I find myself excluded from most duties upon the Raft and also deprived of companionship because those in the troupe who were just suspicious of me before my dismissal as the Novice to the Spirit-Guide are now openly hostile towards me and it does not help that the excitement brought about by the discovery of the Omens begins to overwhelm the troupe so that they become unusually bold and frenzied.

I am also wilfully excluded from being chosen as one of the Sentinels who are posted at the front edge of the Raft with a duty to watch the far horizon to which we journey and to report if the promised destination comes into view and I am the only member of the troupe who is not trusted to be vigilant when visiting the back of the Raft where any change in the direction of our travel will be clearly shown by the trail of waste that we leave behind if it should no longer lead straight back to the far horizon from where we have journeyed.

Then it is announced that a great festival of prayer will be held so that the troupe can give praise and thanks to the great and wise God Gonamana for bringing us so far on our sacred journey and also to ask for His blessing in the cycles of darkness and light yet to come as we discover His divine purpose for the troupe who are His joyful and deserving chosen ones.

And seemingly in response to all of that which the troupe does yet more and more breaches continue to be discovered especially in the beds of yellow bananas nearer to the front part of the Raft and as each gaping mouth appears it is celebrated as being another sign from the great and wise God Gonamana Himself who is showing His regard for the troupe and there is no longer any fear about these Omens or any concern that the surface fabric of the Raft is no longer safe to walk upon even as the holes all grow wider and deeper.

But I do not share either the joy or the excitement shown by my fellows and when I try to warn the wise and the revered ones of the troupe that the stalks of the growing green infant fruits that surround each of the breaches are failing to sprout so that new yellow bananas are not replacing the ripe ones that have been taken I am told that it is also His will and that I must not question His purpose regarding the troupe.

I can not help but to be very anxious when I look at how my fellows behave all around me and I try to recall the worthiness that I had when I was with Wise Loomis and I spoke the words of prophesy to him even as I felt within me the truth about how the destiny of the troupe would surely fail despite that I was not able to speak of it when the chatter in my head could not find the right words.

My anxiety is not easily hidden because without my duties as the Novice to the Spirit-Guide and with none of my fellows prepared to trust me I find myself very much unwanted as well as disrespected and lonely and I have little to do but to quietly witness what I see as a growing disharmony upon the Raft that surely endangers the welfare of the troupe.

And so I try to avoid my fellows as much as I can and I choose only to visit places that are away from their disrespectful stares and their increasingly hysterical natter where I can quietly consider the words of prophesy that have caused me so much trouble and I do not stop praying that I might determine if a Spirit did truly seek me out so as to speak important words to me.

Not only do I pray to the great and wise God Gonamana for His supreme guidance but I also pray to each of His obedient Spirit servants in turn to ask if any of them has shown to me the form of a dark figure that looked so strange without any fur and that spoke so mysteriously about an important message that the troupe should hear.

I also quietly recite to myself as much of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors that I am able to recall having been taught and I carefully search for any of its words that could be determined in error and which truly tell of a Spirit that has not before now been named or worshipped and I also search for any reference to a monkey ancestor who had powers greater than his fellows.

And then I seek an answer to the cause of my anxiety in the unfailing examples set by the domains of Creation around me and I begin by contemplating the Sun that shines upon the waters of the mighty Ocean and then I carefully watch the Clouds as they travel across the Sky.

I also try to refuse the sleep that is demanded of us all so that I can truly witness the Moon as it journeys the darkened Sky and protects the troupe when the cycle of darkness is upon the Raft but I am helpless to resist the darkness that takes away the chatter in my head after I have settled down with my loyal Dolfis and my precious son Tofas.

And so in my chosen place I remain where my fellows no longer visit and I continue to question all that we monkeys have been gifted with in Creation about us since all of the cycles of darkness and light have passed while the Raft has pursued its sacred journey until suddenly the chatter in my head tells me of something new that has surely not been spoken of before now by the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors.

And with the new wisdom comes again a greatly satisfying feeling of

worthiness that I welcome and savour before I try to share it with Dolfis after she returns to me from her duties that she has completed elsewhere upon the Raft.

“Dolfis. My loyal mate. Have you ever questioned why each domain of Creation is ordered by an Immortal that is gifted to it...” I say as we wait together for the coming of the cycle of darkness which will soon be upon the Raft.

“...and yet the domain that is closest to us and which is our only precious home is not so gifted with a Spirit...?” And I grin as I stroke the smooth flattened surface of the Raft next to where I am squatting down.

“...for surely the precious yellow fruits do not grow without order. And what of the sacred journey that takes us straight and true to the far horizon ahead of us?”

Dolfis looks across from the game that she started playing with Tofas to see where my hand is still touching the Raft and then she stares across at me with an anxious look clearly showing on her face.

“Tomas. Please...” She replies as if she is in pain.

“...I beg you not to question any more the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors. You scare me and you have already made it so the troupe now also disrespects your loyal mate and your only son. I am afraid for us all. Will you not go and plead with Lord Simotan for his generosity and be guided by Wise Loomis again?”

“I was taught the guidance of Wise Loomis...” I say lowering my voice so that none of our neighbours will hear me.

“...and I have learned that Spirit-Guidance comes not from hearing the voices of the Spirits but from determining what is best for the troupe and what best confirms the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors.”

My grin has gone and the chatter in my head is suddenly telling me that Dolfis has spoken truly and that I should not seek to make any more trouble for both her and for Tofas and so I do not speak again of my new determination that the domain of the Raft itself is too important to be without a named Spirit to order and protect it and instead I wait in silence for the two of them to finish their game.

It is not long before the yellow disc of the Sun approaches the far horizon and a gloom starts to cover the Raft and so Dolfis and I help Tofas to say a prayer of thanks for yet another safe cycle of light which we then follow with a prayer to

the Spirit of the Moon to ask for its protection in the coming cycle of darkness and we both now grin because Tofas is learning well the prayers that he must teach to the young ones that he will have in his turn.

My head is full of chatter as we all settle ourselves down to sleep and I say a silent prayer of thanks that my father Tomag and his loyal mate Saramis do not have to witness how the troupe now treats me with such disrespect and as the glow from the Moon starts to show itself above the far horizon I close my eyes and I prepare to surrender the chatter in my head to the dream-pictures of the Spirits.

### 3. 4

It is happening again.

I find myself looking up at the Moon that is journeying the darkened Sky above me and it is shining its pale blue light down upon the Raft.

There is chatter in my head that is recalling some dream-pictures of the Spirits which remain despite me being now awakened.

I look around anxiously and afraid that I will see the dark Spirit returning to me but I see only the sleeping forms of Dolfis and Tofas and the beds of yellow bananas around our chosen place that seem so strange in the gloom and the silence.

I am distracted by the dream-pictures that linger in my head because they are showing me the sight of the Raft as I saw it so very many cycles of darkness and light long since passed when I was an infant and I had the eyes of a youngster and together with the pictures I can also hear the voice of my father who is talking to me and teasing me and saying that those who are disobedient are gobbled up by the cold and hungry sharks.

They are surely only pictures and voices in my head but they seem so very real as I stare into the face of my father which is grinning up close to my own face but his is so very big compared to my small infant form and when I look away I can see my short arms and my fat little legs all covered over with my fine red infant fur.

I can also see that the Sun is shining brightly from high up in a clear blue Sky while below me are the glittering blue waters of the mighty Ocean into which I would surely fall if I was not being held in the strong safe hands of my father who seems to be teaching me about the cold and hungry sharks and how truly dangerous it can be at the edge of the Raft.

As I gaze down with my belly slowly tightening with fear I can hear my father's voice saying.

“Tomas. You must not deny the wisdom of those that live to reach the destination that we all seek. If you do not learn to journey safely with us it will be witnessed by all when you discover that your final home lies here in the waters all around you.”

And with his warning comes a picture of all the many cold and hungry sharks and it fills my head so that I start to shake with fear.

Then he turns away from the waters of the mighty Ocean and he begins to carry me towards the middle of the Raft as he whispers in my ear.

“There is a greater wisdom beyond your own and you will not know fear if you come to learn what is already spoken. And there will be many that you have not yet seen who will come to seek the same learning that you were the first to receive.”

And again I look down but now I see the dark shadow of my father stretched out on the pathway as he carries me along between the beds of yellow bananas and the dark shadow is tall and thin as it moves across the smooth flattened surface of the Raft.

“I can only trust that you do not fail...” My father is then saying.

But I do not hear more because I am distracted by the dark shadow that my infant eyes are seeing as it moves beneath me and I suddenly determine that it is so very familiar with its form and the way it moves and the way it seems to speak the words that already have a home within me.

I close my eyes and I shake my head to rid myself of the dream-picture but the dark shadow of my father’s form remains to be seen and despite its smooth blackness it seems to grin and mock me with weary contempt.

Then the dream-picture suddenly changes and I find that I am recalling the sight of a bunch yellow bananas beyond which is the clear blue of the Sky and I determine that I am looking upwards.

I also see that my infant self is lolling upon the surface of the Raft and Saramis - daughter of Saramo - is feeding me big pieces of the precious yellow fruits that she is holding above me.

“My precious son is a greedy one...” She is saying as she leans across me and shelters my eyes from the brightness of the Sun.

“...you eat much and soon there will be none left for your fellows.” And because she is shaded by her own dark shadow I can not see her face.

“Look here Tomas. The Raft is hungry too...” And where she signs to me I see that a breach in the surface fabric of the Raft is opening up and Saramis is



reaching across me to place a large ripe yellow banana into this new hole that is so much like a mouth.

“...and so we must share.” I hear Saramis say as an anger grows within me until I want to cry out to her that the precious food is all mine.

And as more breaches open up around me Saramis feeds each of them with pieces of my yellow bananas and I can only scowl and let water run from my eyes as I try to see the look on her face that is still hidden by dark shadow.

“The Raft eats much and soon there will be none left for you.” I then hear her say but I determine that it is not Saramis speaking and that it is not my mother who was feeding me and all the mouths that now surround me.

The breaches in the surface of the Raft quickly grow in number and size and all too soon they start to merge and deepen until there is so little fabric of the Raft left beneath me that I am falling through the fragile remains.

I fall and I fall until I am splashing through the surface waters of the mighty Ocean where I am alone with none for fellowship but the cold and hungry sharks.

“We are greedy too.” Says the nearest of them and they take hold of my arm with their teeth and they start to shake me roughly.

The voice of an adult female then reaches me from a great distance.

“Tomas. Oh Tomas.” And the cold and hungry sharks slowly disappear into darkness.

“Tomas...” But my body still shakes from side to side because something is gripping my arm and I can clearly hear the voice that is calling out my name.

“...my precious Tomas.” I am overwhelmed by emptiness.

“Tomas. Please Tomas. Why do you not wake?”

It is the voice of Dolfis.

I open my eyes and I see that it truly is my faithful mate who is shaking me.

“I was afraid that you had been taken away from me by the Spirit of the Moon.” She says and she strokes my mane to show her joy that I have awakened.

The Sun has risen above the far horizon and I can feel its warmth on my fur.

The chatter that quickly fills the empty darkness in my head is very ordered and without confusion so that I feel very worthy and I grin because I have now determined that I was not mistaken in being anxious about the breaches in the surface of the Raft that the troupe has named as being Omens and about the new young yellow bananas that have been failing to sprout.

And I continue to grin because I have also determined that both of these troubles that threaten the safety of the troupe are brought by the same danger.

I look up at Dolfis who is standing over me and I am no longer afraid of how our fellows regard us both with their disrespect because now I am able to tell them all about how the Omens have truly been sent to warn the troupe of a disaster that will soon threaten the endurance of the Raft.

And I grin more when I then also determine that because my new wisdom will truly save the sacred journey from such certain failure my fellows will quickly have to agree that they have wronged me and then they will surely strive to show me an even greater respect than I enjoyed before.

“My precious Tomas. What did happen...? Asks Dolfis.

“...you look so full of joy.” And she helps me to stand so that she can hug me as she presses her face against the fur on my chest.

“Dolfis...” I reply holding her tightly.

...as the Moon journeyed the darkened Sky I have seen things and I have learned much. I believe the Spirits did free me from my duty of sleep and so allowed me to have dream-pictures of my own...” I am talking quickly because I am excited and as I stroke her fur I can feel her body stiffen.

“...and so much have I seen.”

But Dolfis draws back from me and the look of delight on her face has been replaced by a look of anguish.

“Oh please Tomas. Tell me that you are not lost from yourself again for your words frighten me.”

I put my hands on her shoulders and I look straight into her eyes.

“My precious Dolfis. Listen to me and I will tell you all...” I say as I continue to grin.

“...for I have determined that the troupe has chosen to act in error and truly I now have the wisdom to guide them away from the greed that will take from the troupe both the yellow bananas and the Raft.”

Dolfis stares back at me anxiously but before she can say anything I add.

“It is surely what the words of prophesy have been telling us because I have truly been guided by a Spirit that spoke to me when the cycle of darkness was upon the Raft. This Spirit has seen the destiny of the troupe and it warns us all of a disaster that awaits the troupe.”

And my head starts to fill with chatter that feels new and worthy and I want Dolfis to hear all of it.

“The Spirit saw in me the picture of my father’s long dark shadow that I was able to recall from when I was an infant and it took that form upon itself so that I would see its presence. And now the Spirit has spoken again to me and it took the voice of my mother.”

Dolfis is looking at me as if I am a threat to her but I do not worry about what she is surely feeling because the chatter in my head is too overwhelming as I recall the words of the prophesy and I determine that at last I can speak of their purpose.

“Dolfis...” I say as I try to speak more slowly.

“...it is about the greed of the troupe and the suffering of the Raft as we take from it the many yellow bananas that we do. This greed will destroy us all. The yellow bananas. The Raft. The troupe.” But I can not control my excitement and the wondrous feeling of worthiness growing inside me and I can not help but speak quickly.

“The words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors tell us nothing of this but the prophesy does. It tells us that we will be afraid when we learn what is already falsely spoken when the many that we have not yet seen come to seek the same rewards that we were the first to receive...” I grin and I nod at Dolfis.

“...do you not hear me? The troupe is being told that the words passed down to us by the ancestors have spoken falsely and that we must be afraid because many more members of the troupe have yet to be birthed who will all need to share the yellow bananas that nourish us.”

But Dolfis is shaking her head and her eyes are pleading with me to stop.

“The prophesy also says...” I say before she can interrupt me.

“...that we must deny the wisdom of those that live not to reach the destination that we seek because the failure of our journey will not be witnessed by them when we all discover that our final home lies beyond where is now the water all around us.” Again I grin and I nod.

“It is the ancestors who live not to witness the promised destination but it is us that will witness the failure of our sacred journey when the Raft no longer endures and we are abandoned to the waters of the mighty Ocean all around us.”

Dolfis is shaking and she has water flowing from her eyes as she pulls away from me again.

“The prophesy also says...” I add quietly.

“...that our destiny will be lost and so will be the joys and the rewards that will come in the sharing of all that Creation can offer...” I reach out to pull my

loyal mate closer to me.

...we must learn to share what we have with all of the generations that will come after us on this Raft that is our only precious home. Or we will be lost...just as the Raft will be lost from beneath our feet.” And I stop speaking so that Dolfis can determine what I have said.

But instead she pushes me away from her and she reaches down to drag Tofas onto her back where he clings to her fur and whimpers.

“Be warned Tomas - son of Tomag... She whispers as she scowls at me.

“...and speak not of this to any of our fellows. You must quickly find yourself again before I will return with your precious son.”

And then she is gone.

She has hurried away to be elsewhere and she has left me with a powerful feeling of my own worthiness and the chatter in my head that is telling me that truly I am the only one in the troupe who is awake to the truth while all of my fellows are foolishly sleeping.

I do not question why Dolfis has taken Tofas away before we have all eaten together and I squat down to recall what I did say to her and I marvel at how so many things suddenly seem to be so very easy to determine.

With great reverence I pick some yellow bananas and as I carefully feed on them the chatter in my head tells me that I truly do have powers greater than my fellows because now I have been gifted with dream-pictures of my own that have shown me important truths and so I say a prayer of thanks to the great and wise God Gonamana for his generosity and I thank Him for granting me the great worthiness that I now feel.

Then I determine that when the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors come to be spoken in the generations yet to come the name of Tomas - son of Tomag - will be greatly revered and respected because it was me that warned my fellow monkeys that the destiny of the troupe was threatened by the loss of the Raft and with it the failure of the sacred journey.

I look around me and from across the bed of yellow bananas that separate me from my nearest neighbours I see Gordan and Jilet both staring intently in my direction as they feed on some precious yellow fruits.

I grin and I call across to them.

“Gordan - son of Gordak - and your loyal mate Jilet - daughter of Jilit - I have important news that I must take to Wise Loomis and then he and I will speak to Lord Simotan and to the council of Elders. I will return and together we will

give our thanks to the great and wise God Gonamana - praise Him.”

They both point to the Sky and respond as they should but then they just look at each other and neither of them returns my grin.

And so I set off towards the given place of the Spirit-Guide where I hope to find Wise Loomis and as I walk along I ignore the wary looks that my fellows give me because I determine that soon they will all show me such great respect after I have met with the wise and revered ones of the troupe and the chatter in my head also tells me that Dolfis too will regret what she did say to me.

I am full of joy until I arrive closer to the given place of Wise Loomis because it surprises me to see that already gathered there with him is the council of Elders and they are all nattering very intently together even as they see me approaching them and they scowl across at me.

I was not expecting to meet so many wise and revered members of the troupe gathered all together like this and I had not wanted to share my glorious news with this many of my fellows so soon but as they surely all must hear what I have to say before the danger to the Raft can be stopped I do not hesitate in approaching them.

As I near the gathering they lower their voices so that I cannot hear their words and the chatter in my head tells me to stop where I am and to wait for them to finish speaking with each other for it must be something that is not for my hearing.

Then when they have finished their quiet natter together they all move to stand next to each other in a line facing in my direction as if to exclude me from joining them.

I try to determine why they have done this and what I should do to respond but before I can offer Wise Loomis a polite greeting he silently signs for me to step forward.

None of the wise and revered ones of the troupe speak a greeting to me and because the Sun is shining into their faces from behind me they all stare in my direction with eyes that are half closed and it makes their faces seem even more angry than I determine they already look.

“Tomas - son of Tomag...” Says Wise Loomis in a very formal manner.

“...I have given my guidance to Lord Simotan and I have spoken with the council of Elders about what you did say when you were lost from yourself and how you have failed me as my apprentice. We have also been much saddened and angered by your words and your actions that have been reported to me since

your dismissal.”

The chatter in my head tells me that these hostile faces will soon be grinning and my recent behaviour will be quickly forgiven when they all hear what I have to say.

“Wise Loomis and revered ones hear me for I have...” I start to say while grinning politely. But I am stopped by a furious shout.

“QUIET! And show respect to your Spirit-Guide.” It is the chief Elder Parus - son of Patus - and he shocks me into silence with his anger. Wise Loomis nods at Parus and then he says to me.

“We have considered what should be done about you and we are ready to make a judgement...” The looks on all of their faces start to frighten me.

“...for you will not deny that you have boldly questioned the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors and you have disrespected a commandment given by Lord Simotan.”

The chatter in my head tells me that my news will not now be willingly heard and for what they are saying to me I should be very afraid. A cold shiver passes down my back and all over my body I feel the hairs of my fur rising.

I move to speak but Wise Loomis does not allow me for he has more to say.

“Very many members of the troupe have brought to me their concerns and their fears as to your loyalty and purpose now that the promised destination beyond the far horizon is to be achieved and the Elders of the council and I have agreed that your behaviour abuses much of that which we regard as sacred and hallowed. What say you before we make a judgement Tomas - son Tomag - you may speak now.”

I feel very much alone and isolated as I face this hostile line of my superiors and my chest thumps fast and my throat becomes very dry but I determine that somehow I must make them listen to me because the safety of us all depends upon it.

“Wise Loomis. Revered members of the council...” I cautiously begin to say.

“...to find you gathered here to make a judgment upon me surprises and shocks me greatly for I came only to tell Wise Loomis that there is a danger where we look and see it not and also to speak of the breaches in the Raft that have been named as Omens. I came with a warning that the sacred journey and the troupe itself is in peril...” Wise Loomis interrupts me by saying scornfully.

“We will not listen again to you speak about your words of prophesy and about your visions of a false Spirit.” And some of the Elders shake their heads

and mutter their disfavour of me but I raise up my head and I pray that by telling them the truth it will redeem me and so help to save the troupe.

“Yes I did say that a mysterious figure came to me when the Moon was travelling the darkened Sky and that it brought with it words of prophesy about the destiny of the troupe...” I begin and I try to keep my voice steady.

“... but I was mistaken because I surely was not awake when a Spirit showed itself to me in a dream-picture using a form that was familiar to me. That of the dark shadow that was cast upon the surface of the Raft that I witnessed as an infant when my father Tomag - son of Tomak - carried me...”

“STOP...!” Shouts Parus - son of Patus - and he steps forward until his muzzle is close to mine.

“...Tomag - son of Tomak - was much honoured and greatly respected by us all and to hear his only...his treacherous son...” Water from his mouth spits into my face as he fights to control his rage.

“...to accuse him of bringing to you this...terrible falsity and with it such...disharmony to the troupe...it offends each and every one of your fellows. By all that is sacred your words condemn you and prove that our judgment upon you will be just.”

His words hurt me more than if he had struck me and an anger rises up inside me not only towards him because of his refusal to listen to what I need to tell him but also towards myself because I did not prepare how I would speak to just such a gathering as this that surely I should have expected.

“Wise Loomis. Respected Elders...” I reply as calmly and as boldly as I can despite the confusion of chatter in my head and the water now filling my eyes.

“...please listen to me because the sacred journey will fail when the Raft perishes...”

But Parus is now showing me his teeth and his hands are clenched to make fists that he has raised up as if to knock me down.

“ENOUGH OF THIS! I have heard enough.” And he turns to face his fellows.

“Before us stands a true Heretic and I say make a judgment upon him now. I say Separate him from us before he further offends our great and wise God Gonamana - praise Him.”

And together this powerful gathering of wise and respected members of the troupe who are standing shoulder to shoulder in agreement and with a shared feeling of anger and contempt towards me all respond together by pointing to

the Sky as they chant.

“Praise Him.”

I am stunned and completely overcome with fear at hearing myself judged a Heretic and that a severe punishment such as Separation from the troupe has been ordered and because of it and for the only occasion since I was grown beyond being a young infant I mistakenly remain motionless and silent and I fail to respond as I should.

Their reaction is predictable and inevitable but the ferocity of it takes me by surprise.

“SEPARATE THE HERETIC!” Shouts the deputy chief Elder Cobus - son of Corus - and with calls of condemnation shouted at me from all of the others he points a crooked and boney finger in my direction.

Then they all face away from me and they raise their hands to give me the sign of Separation.

I have not before seen the giving of this sign but it is what the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors say must be shown to a member of the troupe who has proved themselves to be a danger to the troupe and a threat to the sacred journey which in its turn invites the wrath of the great and wise God Gonamana.

And so by Separating me the troupe displays to Him that they do not share my Heresy and that I have been rejected by His obedient and loyal chosen ones.

One who is Separated like this no longer bears a name just as one who is Separated like this is no longer a member of the troupe.



### 3. 5

Wise Loomis is more sad than angry when he takes me to face Lord Simotan and as we walk to the given place of the Alpha he tells me that I must spare no effort in trying to reform myself and in trying to prove that I can be honorable enough once more to regain my name and to rejoin the troupe.

I am filled with such sorrow as I stand before Lord Simotan and while I stare down at my feet he shakes his head and he listens to what Wise Loomis tells him of the judgment that was passed upon me by the council of Elders.

I wait silently because I am not allowed to speak and soon my Separation is confirmed by a formal command.

From now on I must live alone and in isolation at a place that is near to the back edge of the Raft where no member of the troupe will be troubled by me as I feed or I rid myself of my waste and there I must remain Separated and without speaking just as none in the troupe are allowed to approach or to speak to me.

The news of my Separation reaches every part of the Raft even before the Cloud-rain comes and as I walk in search of a new place for myself I am very much ashamed when my fellows keep their distance as they quietly stare at me with curious and disdainful looks just as some even draw their youngsters further away as if to protect them.

There are no members of the troupe in this generation of monkeys who have shared the Raft with a Heretic but there are none that have not have heard the story of a fellow who before he was commanded as Separated was named Rimtuk - son of Rimtas.

Rimtuk claimed that the great and wise God Gonamana Himself would talk to him when the cycles of darkness were upon the Raft and that together they would natter and walk and also feed upon yellow bananas together which he said were blue because of the pale light shining down from the Moon.

He also claimed that he saw Spectres that walked upon the waters of the mighty Ocean and that they called out to him until eventually Rintuk was seen stepping from the edge of the Raft so that he might join them.

Not even Dolfis and Tofas are allowed to speak with me now and I must make no move to be with them either despite the pain that it gives me to be apart from my faithful mate and my precious son especially when the waters of the Cloud-rain come and also when the Sun has finished its journey across the Sky and I settle down to sleep.

The chatter in my head tells me that I must not despair and that I must not become lost from myself because somehow and without any help or comfort from my fellows I still must rescue the troupe from the danger that it faces and with no guidance from the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors I must do it without offending the great and wise God Gonamana.

To help myself endure as I squat down in my place of exile I keep repeating in a quiet voice that none in the troupe will hear.

“Truly my name is Tomas - son of Tomag - and I am a member of this troupe. May it please not invite the wrath of the great and wise God Gonamana - praise Him - if I question the judgment of the troupe and try to bring wisdom to those who must heed it.”

Then I sit staring out towards the far horizon while I try to order the chatter in my head as I surely should have done before I spoke to Wise Loomis and the council of Elders.

I determine that my dream-pictures have shown me not only that the Raft is destined to perish because of the greed of the troupe which feeds without regard upon the yellow bananas that sprout from its surface but also that the taking of the yellow bananas from the Raft is somehow making the breaches appear.

I lay my hand on the smooth flattened surface of the Raft next to me and as I gently stroke the tightly interwoven tangle of branches beneath my leathery palm the chatter in my head tells me that if the Raft is to perish then surely now it must be living.

And then I determine that if the Raft now lives then surely it must gain nourishment just as the troupe does and that surely only the yellow bananas that sprout from its surface and the waters of the Cloud-rain that are absorbed into its surface fabric can be its food.

I also then determine that if the Raft depends upon the yellow bananas for its survival just as the troupe does then as the number of monkeys birthed becomes

greater with each new generation and the number of the precious yellow fruits that get taken from the Raft becomes greater too then surely the amount of food that the beds of yellow bananas sprout for us will not always be enough to nourish both the troupe and the Raft.

This new wisdom is making my head feel light with worthiness and when I close my eyes so that I can try to picture the Raft without any yellow bananas growing upon it I find myself questioning if it is now that too many of the precious yellow fruits are being taken from the Raft so that breaches are appearing because of its hunger.

I keep my eyes closed despite that I can not picture in my head how the Raft will be when the yellow bananas are gone and instead I recall how I questioned why the Raft does not have a Spirit of its own and why an Immortal was not gifted to the Raft by the great and wise God Gonamama to give order to the domain of the only precious home of the troupe.

“Yes...” I say to myself quietly as at last I determine that surely it was the Spirit of the Raft that came to me in the cycle of darkness to give me the dream-pictures that did speak of the prophesy.

“...yes...it was the Spirit of the Raft that has been guiding me and who has been warning me of the damage we do to its given domain.”

I open my eyes again and I grin as I calmly gaze out across the calm blue waters of the mighty Ocean and even as I question why the ancestors did not tell us about the Spirit of the Raft I solemnly pray to the great and wise God Gonamana to forgive us all for not having given praise to His obedient Spirit servant before now and I then say my first prayer to the Spirit of the Raft to ask for its forgiveness and its guidance.

I seem to be filled with warmth and many good feelings and when I look about at the wonders of Creation around me I see that the bright yellow disc of the Sun is approaching the mid point in its journey across the wide blue Sky and the first of the small white Clouds have appeared ahead of the Raft.

The chatter in my head is calm and ordered and it soon questions why the troupe has not before now been punished for failing to praise one of His Spirit servants and then also why no Spirit-Guides have determined this failure before now in all of the cycles of darkness and light that have long since passed after the start of the sacred journey.

But I determine no answers and so I pray to the vastness of Creation around me that I might be shown a sign to tell me that I truly do not threaten His

chosen ones and then that I might be given help in doing my loyal duty to Him and to all of His obedient Spirit servants so that I can redeem myself by saving the troupe from disaster.

The dark shadow of the Cloud-shade soon comes upon the Raft and I squat in my place of Separation completely alone and without comfort as I try to picture Dolfis and Tofas who I yearn to be with and then when the Cloud-rain comes I quietly let it wash away the water that is flowing from my eyes.

### 3. 6

I tell myself that if any of my fellows choose to witness how I behave in my place of exile then they must see that I truly do merit having my name given back to me and my membership of the troupe restored because surely that is the only way that I will be allowed to speak to the troupe about my new wisdom and for the members of the troupe to be allowed to listen to my warning.

And so I stay in my place of Separation as I should and I obey with dignity and pride all the laws and the customs as instructed by the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors and I offer no trouble or bother to any member of the troupe.

I display a proper amount of the remorse and the sorrow that I truly feel from not being allowed the fellowship of Dolfis and Tofas and without any duties to them or to the troupe I take to calmly and passively observing what goes on around me while I try to determine what I am able to do for the best.

From the natter of the troupe that I strive to overhear whenever it is possible I learn that more and more breaches are appearing even as the existing ones grow larger and I also hear it spoken that where the new young yellow bananas fail to sprout the short green stalks that grow up from the fabric of the Raft are withering away.

It is not difficult for me to witness the behavior of those that come nearest to my place of Separation and I see that the troupe grows ever more excited in their belief that they will be delivered to the promised destination beyond the far horizon by the very hand of the great and wise God Gonamana Himself it is now said and they praise Him and they feast and they make offerings of thanks to Him all with the precious yellow fruits that they continue to pick without restraint.

The chatter in my head tells me that I can not act against this foolishness alone and that only Wise Loomis can speak to Lord Simotan of the danger that

exists and that only Lord Simotan has the power to rule the council of Elders.

It is the duty of Wise Loomis to make reports about me to Lord Simotan and to the council of Elders and I often see him observing me from afar where he seems saddened by my Separation when he is alone and disdainful of me whenever he is in the company of others.

I determine that I must surely try to find out if Wise Loomis will favour me by listening to what I have to say and so I choose the start of a cycle of light when the Sun's early warmth is only just being felt to walk along some seldom used pathways to arrive near to the given place of the Spirit-Guide where I stop close enough to Wise Loomis so that he can see me.

Then I squat down on the stepping places in the middle of a bed of yellow bananas away from where any members of the troupe might be bothered by me and I prepare to wait while Wise Loomis undertakes his duties.

I am surprised and also pleased that I am not challenged and so I am able to remain where I am waiting patiently and proudly squatting with my head held high while all those that chance to see me do so with caution and curiosity even as the Sun journeys across the Sky and the Clouds come and go leaving their waters of the Cloud-rain.

It is only when the Sun is approaching the far horizon and after he has finished his duties that Wise Loomis walks across to stand close by me and with his hands behind his back he does not look down at me and he does not speak to me.

I remain squatting where I am and after a pause I say to him quietly so that only he will hear.

"Wise Loomis. Please help me." But he does not move and he lets me wait before he quietly replies.

"Do you already ask for Inclusion?" He talks to me without speaking my name and I have to hide the pain that it causes me.

"That would surely not be granted so soon..." I reply.

"... but with your help I can but start to redeem my name and repay the faith that you had in me before now. As your chosen apprentice..." And I pause before adding.

"...and as your friend." I see his body stiffen but still he does not look at me.

"Wise Loomis. Will you allow me to ask you about the cycles of darkness and light long since passed when the ancestors first journeyed upon the Raft..?" I talk quietly again and I am careful not to look at him.

“...when the troupe did not need so many of the places on Raft as is does now?” He does not answer me and I fear that my words are telling him that I am still lost from myself and so I try again.

“Wise Loomis. At the start of the sacred journey the names of those monkeys chosen by the great and wise God Gonamana - praise Him...” And with great care I point a finger to the Sky as does Wise Loomis and together we say.

“...praise Him...”

“...the names of the first upon the Raft who were our ancestors and who began the sacred journey...their names are quickly spoken when that story in the Troupe-Lore is told...” I continue.

“...but to speak the many names of those who will pray at the end of this cycle of light would not so quickly be told.”

Wise Loomis remains still as he stares out across the waters of the mighty Ocean and I start to question if he is disregarding me but at last I see that his long grey tail flicks to one side and so I continue to talk.

“The youngsters of the many named will give the troupe their new young ones in their turn just as Dolfis and I have grown to be adults and have since birthed Tofas...” And as I say their names there is water in my eyes and my voice betrays my sadness.

“...but now I am commanded as Separated and Dolfis will not give the troupe any more new young ones as other adults will do and Tofas will be without any brothers and sisters as other youngsters will surely have.”

The chatter in my head tells me that as Wise Loomis is allowing this chance for me to explain myself I would be foolish to waste it and so I determine that I must speak the words that should be heard.

“Wise Loomis. The Troupe will continue to grow many and its members will come to cover the Raft. What will happen to us when all places upon the Raft are chosen?”

Wise Loomis turns to look across the beds of yellow bananas and at his fellows who are busy finishing their duties and preparing for the coming of the cycle of darkness.

“Wise Loomis. Are you not afraid that the breaches that you welcome as being Omens take from us the very Raft upon which we journey and that where any breach grows no monkey can live and no yellow bananas will sprout...?” I feel myself getting anxious and so I try to speak more slowly.

“...are you not afraid that if it is not soon that we reach the promised

destination beyond the far horizon there will not be enough Raft left beneath our feet for both the troupe and the yellow bananas to thrive?"

But still Wise Loomis does not move or speak and just as the chatter in my head questions if he is purposely ignoring me he says carefully.

"Do you continue to spread fear and disharmony? Will you always doubt what has been commanded? Are you still so lost from yourself that you can not control what you do and say?"

And with that he turns away from me and he walks back to his chosen place.

The disappointment and frustration that fills me is overwhelming and so I hurry back to my place of exile where nearby I stand at the edge of the Raft to look down onto the waters of the mighty Ocean below me where its surface is glowing red from the very last of the light from the Sun that will soon be gone.

I picture the cold and hungry sharks that surely now will get their one final triumph when the Raft comes to perish and the troupe is delivered to them as a last glorious feast.

I am suddenly very tired as my growing despair seems to weigh down upon my shoulders and I see the far horizon ahead of me as I have never seen it before.

So far away.

And the Sky too seems far away and so big and empty above me.

Then I try to picture what the great and wise God Gonamana must see when He looks down onto a small and lonely Raft that is seemingly lost between the far horizons that bound the waters of such a mighty Ocean and on it the tiny figures of this troupe of foolish nattering monkeys that He chose to favour.

I determine that if I step from edge of the Raft now I will not have to witness the suffering and loss that surely will come in their turn but instead I let out a cry to the vast emptiness of Creation before me and then a howl so loud and filled with such anguish that the Spirits themselves must feel the pain of it.

And in the growing gloom around me all the noises from the troupe immediately stop and the cycle of darkness begins without a sound to be heard.



### 3. 7

I awake before the Sun has risen but I see that the Sky above the far horizon already has a brightness which tells me that the cycle of light is soon to come and so I stand up and I stretch the stiffness from my limbs unseen by any in the troupe around me who have yet to awaken from their sleep.

When the chatter is fully returned to my head I determine that it has replaced a dream-picture that I can not seem to clearly recall but I sense that it was disturbing and I am left with a feeling of anxiousness.

I do not want to linger at my place of exile and so I gather up the empty skins of the yellow bananas that I have kept in a neat pile and I set off to visit a nearby small place at the back edge of the Raft where I am not a bother to any of the troupe when the cycle of light begins and I rid myself of my waste.

The anxious feeling I have soon leaves me when I watch the Sun rising up from behind the far horizon to the side of Raft and because it gives me a feeling of cheer and confidence I do not hurry back to my place of Separation and instead I return slowly and approach the place where I am expected to be found along a different pathway until I see that my absence has attracted some interest from my nearest neighbours who are standing in the small group with their backs to me.

Unseen by all of them who have gathered at my place of exile I stop and I listen to their natter that speaks about a fearful howl that they heard at the end of the last cycle of light since passed and also how it seems that now the Separated one is gone and that I surely have been taken by the dark and powerful Spirit that controls me with its terrible purpose.

Their foolishness angers me and so I quietly walk up behind them until I am closer than I should be and I bark loudly to give them awareness of my approach and that they should avoid me.

The sudden nearness of my arrival shocks them all and they quickly jump

aside and yak excitedly before they hurry away feeling nervous and resentful.

Their reaction makes me grin but I soon let my cruel feelings go and I settle myself down to quietly contemplate the view across the waters of the mighty Ocean and to pray to the great and wise God Gonamana for help in determining if there is now any hope at all both for me and for the troupe that has rejected me.

“Tomas?” I hear a voice from behind me gently say and because it has spoken my name I am greatly surprised.

I turn around to see that while I have been praying Wise Loomis has quietly approached my place of exile and at once the chatter in my head questions not only why he has come to seek me out here so that any of my curious neighbours can witness him speaking to me but also why he has spoken my name.

“Wise Loomis. You surprise me greatly...” I say as I stand up and I bow my head as a sign of respect.

“...you come to my place of exile and you speak my name. This honours me greatly but surely you risk much by doing so.” And I indicate those of the troupe that are staring at us from across the beds of yellow bananas.

“What do you need of me Wise Loomis?” I ask as I look more closely at him and I see that he seems to be both tired and distracted and that he also has a scowl on his face as if something important is making him anxious.

“It is the words that you did say...” He replies.

“...when you came to me in the last cycle of light since passed for they have found a home within me and it is my duty to the troupe to ask if you have more to tell me so that my guidance to the troupe can be truly wise.”

I briefly close my eyes while I quickly thank the great and wise God Gonamana for hearing my prayer for help and then I say to my welcome visitor.

“Wise Loomis. You are truly wise. Your name will be honored and respected even as the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors are told to those who will come after us...”

“Enough of that...” He interrupts me unkindly as he dismisses my words with a wave of his arm.

“...for I also recall what you did say before the judgment was passed upon you about how the sacred journey will fail when the Raft perishes. What has this to do with the yellow bananas that we depend on and the breaches that we call the Omens. And what about the troupe that honours Him with our new young ones? Speak Tomas or are you truly a Heretic that shall remain lost and

Separated from us?”

Behind Wise Loomis that he is surely ignoring are more curious members of the troupe who are gathering together to witness this meeting between their Spirit-Guide and the Separated Heretic but they are truly not close enough to hear what we are saying to each other.

I choose not to look at them but I stand as tall as I can to show them all how dignified I remain and I say quietly.

“Wise Loomis. The yellow bananas that sprout up from the Raft and the waters of the Cloud-rain that fall down from the Clouds both do nourish and sustain us. Without enough of this nourishment our bodies will become weak and small for this is told to us by the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors...” I keep looking directly at Wise Loomis.

“...and what I believe and what has not been told to us is that the Raft is as we are because it lives and it hungers for nourishment as we do. Wise Loomis?” I stop because he suddenly closes his eyes and he seems to struggle with something inside of himself. After a brief pause he opens his eyes and says.

“Yes Tomas. Yes. That is well told. Continue. But be warned that if your words contain not wisdom then they only contain Heresy and you will be condemned further.”

His readiness to listen brings such joy to me that I feel water come to my eyes.

“The words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors...” I continue as I suppress a grin.

“...tell us that the yellow bananas on which we feed are gifted to His chosen ones by He who Created us. But can it be that the Raft needs to bear this bounty of the precious yellow fruits so that it too can feed on His gift?”

Wise Loomis seems to be looking straight through me as if to the far horizon behind where I am standing and when he does not respond I continue.

“The shining from the Sun and the Moon...” I say carefully.

“...the shining from the Sun in the cycle of light and the shining from the Moon in the cycle of darkness...together with the waters of the Cloud-rain that fall...these things are taken by the yellow bananas...by their yellow skins or by the growing stalks which produce them and they become nourishment. Nourishment that we monkeys pick and eat when we are hungry. But if the Raft hungers too does it not also take nourishment from the yellow bananas that sprout before they are picked by the troupe?”

Wise Loomis rubs and smooths the fur on his chest as he looks at me with his brow creased but then he starts to nod as if he is slowly starting to believe that what I am saying is something truly wise which until now has been hidden from him.

“The Raft now suffers because it lacks enough nourishment and it is becoming weaker and smaller as the many breaches appear. The breaches will destroy the Raft if we continue with our greed and we continue to deny the Raft enough of its precious yellow fruits.” I then add and I can no longer suppress my grin because Wise Loomis replies carefully.

“And if the troupe took fewer yellow bananas and shared more of the nourishment with the Raft...the danger will pass... and perhaps the Raft will recover from the damage of the breaches.” He looks pleased but only very briefly because his face displays only pain as he shakes his head.

“But Tomas. How can this be if it is not foretold by the words of the Troupe-Lore? How can we declare that our ancestors have been false with us?”

And I can see that he is trying but with a hard struggle to determine what is and what is not truly told.

“Wise Loomis...” I reply as behind him I see that several more members of the troupe have arrived to join the gathering that is watching us and with most of them now looking puzzled and agitated they have slowly begun to shuffle their way nervously along the nearest pathway so that they can get closer to my place of exile and surely to hear what words Wise Loomis exchanges with the one who is Separated.

“...I can not say why we have not been foretold of this danger that we now make for ourselves or why the Spirits have not spoken of this to you who is the wise and respected Spirit-Guide of the troupe.” Wise Loomis scowls as if he suspects that my words were meant to question his authority and so I reach out and I pat his arm so as to reassure him that I spoke no words of disrespect.

“Wise Loomis...” I say politely.

“...it is my belief that the Raft truly lives and that it is ordered by a Spirit whose name was either not spoken by the ancestors or has been lost from the words of their Troupe-Lore. For it is this Spirit of the Raft that did speak to me of the danger that we now face. So I beg you to give guidance to Lord Simotan and let him judge if this news is falsely spoken.”

Loomis closes his eyes again and after a long pause he slowly starts to nod his head.

I say a quiet prayer of hope that my new words have also found a home within him and that he is about to start helping me.

“Wise Loomis...” I say to him gently.

“...please determine what will happen if this wisdom is truly told but remains suppressed. You are the only one that can guide the troupe and preserve the sacred journey. Truly you must tell the troupe what awaits us all...” And I turn my back on him so that I am facing the waters of the mighty Ocean.

“...if the Raft is allowed to perish beneath our us.” And with a motion of my arm I indicate how close is the dangerous menace of the waters of the mighty Ocean where the cold and hungry sharks swim so patiently.

The chatter in my head is suddenly so calm and ordered and I am filled with much joy because the great and wise God Gonamana has answered my prayer by sending Wise Loomis to listen to my words.

I look down at the waters of the mighty Ocean and I give thanks that I chose not to step from the Raft in my recent despair and I wait and I listen for Wise Loomis to tell me that not only will he speak with Lord Simotan but also that he once again believes in me and trusts me.

But I hear nothing from behind me except the cry of many agitated voices.

I am much puzzled and so I quickly turn around to find that Wise Loomis is lying on the surface of the Raft at my feet. He is motionless and both of his hands are clutched to his chest.

He opens his eyes and looks at me for a final brief moment and then he is Silent.

### 3. 8

The body of Wise Loomis is carried to the place of rituals with great reverence but not before I am attacked with punches and bites by the mob of angry monkeys that witnessed my unprovoked Silencing of their Spirit-Guide and I am left in my place of exile bruised and bleeding and very much alone.

The chatter in my head tells me that it was not so many cycles of darkness and light since passed that I was trusted and respected by the troupe but now the whispered natter that spreads so quickly across the Raft tells of how I tricked Wise Loomis into coming to my place of Separation where I spoke to him my deceits and then with a wave of my arm I was able to summon from the depths of the mighty Ocean an unseen powerful force that then attacked his body at the place on him that I had marked with the touch of my hand.

Without delay the duties of the Spirit-Guide are given to Jawtak - son of Jawtan - who is the most suitable of the council of Elders and despite that he does not approve of the hysterical stories that are told about me he surely puzzles over how it is that I managed to Silence Wise Loomis with just my words together with a gentle touch on his arm.

Lord Simotan is very angry at the loss of the troupe's Spirit-Guide and he commands that I am to be strictly confined to my place of exile and that sentries must be posted to keep me Separated and so unable to endanger any more members of the troupe.

Then he demands that the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors must be studied carefully for what is told about the ceremony of Removal which is an action whereby the troupe can further protect itself against a rogue monkey that remains a danger even after he has been judged a Heretic and Separated.

It was told to me when I was learning the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors that when the command for Removal is spoken by the Alpha it is followed in its turn by a simple ceremony where the nameless exile is

physically forced from the back of the Raft after a short spoken statement of Dismissal.

Soon there are angry adults bringing their youngsters to stare at me from across the beds of yellow bananas and even at the safe distance that they stay from me I can hear them natter about how bad I am and how despite my power to Silence their Spirit-Guide I do not look so dangerous now that the brave ones of the troupe have given me a beating and they speak of me as soon to be begging for mercy when I am taken to my ceremony of Removal.

Despite being confused and afraid I choose to remain obediently detained in my new chosen place where I nurse my cuts and bruises and I pray to the great and wise God Gonamana for guidance.

The chatter in my head tells me that He would surely not have wanted any of this to happen and I question if He has chosen to abandon me because of my Heresy and Separation and so I start to feel even more alone and even more without hope than I did before.

The waters of the Cloud-rain come and they wash away the blood from my fur but they can not wash away the feeling of frustration that weighs heavily on me even as my wet fur does and I desperately question how I am now going to pass on the message that the Spirit of the Raft has entrusted me with so that the sacred journey will not be lost because of a troupe's foolishness and greed.

It does not surprise me that when the Sun has journeyed far across the Sky I am not allowed to attend the ceremony for the Silenced that is held for Wise Loomis but I do mourn his passing with water in my eyes and with quiet prayers that I speak without hope to a vast and unfeeling Creation around me.

The sentries that keep me Separated do not attend the ceremony for Wise Loomis either and being large adult males they squat on the pathways that I would have to use if I was to make an escape and they munch deliberately on yellow bananas while they stare at me carefully as if daring me to pass them.

And then as the sun's shadows on the Raft lengthen I watch the sentries picking more food from the beds of yellow bananas beside them and the chatter in my head questions if the Raft can feel any pain or loss as its precious yellow fruits are taken away and I question if the Raft is desperately crying out a plea for its survival which none of us can hear.

"Do you have to take so many?" I say in frustration to the nearest of the sentries as I watch him pick great handfuls of yellow bananas that he takes to satisfy his seemingly endless appetite and for a moment they all pause and stare

at me suspiciously.

“You will regret it.” I add as I picture these brutes puzzling over what they will eat as they sit upon a Raft that has no more yellow bananas sprouting from it and my words seem to disturb them because they look at each other and yak nervously.

“Do I make you afraid...? I then say when I see how anxious I have made them.

“...you who I have before now taught and gamed with and guided.” And because I determine that they have surely heard the natter of how I Silenced Wise Loomis with the unseen powerful force which is why they seem afraid of me I then say.

“Will you all volunteer to action my Removal from the Raft...? And I sneer because with nothing more to lose I am becoming truly unafraid.

“...will it be any of you that takes me with your big hands and throws me to the waters of the mighty Ocean and then watches the cold and hungry sharks take my warm flesh into their empty bellies?” And I stand up so that I am looking down on them and I snarl.

“Are you not afraid that if you try and harm me...” I add as I try not to grin.

“...that I will command the evil Spirits and the forces of badness that are under my control to descend upon each one of you to seek a revenge of a most terrible kind...?” And the sentries all jump to their feet and they start to make growling noises as they draw back their lips to show me their teeth.

“...a revenge...” I continue with my words getting louder.

“...that will make you regret that your fathers had seed-limbs that gave you flesh and chatter. And do you not fear that I will summon from the very depths of the waters of the mighty Ocean my terrible Spectres of wrong-doing that will search the Raft for your mates and your youngsters and your mothers and your neighbours. To have them all slain and then their foul bodies cast away as food for the cold and hungry sharks?” It must be that I look and sound very terrifying as I step forward shouting and purposely twisting my face because two of the sentries howl and flee from me at great speed and I see that one of them uses both his feet and his knuckles in his need to run faster.

The chatter in my head tells me that despite being Separated I am truly not without some power.

“Wait till Lord Simotan hears of this” I am told by the unsteady voice of the bravest of those remaining to guard me but he is hushed by another because I



am Separated and I am not to be spoken to.

Then the chatter in my head questions if Lord Simotan too will be afraid when he is told about what I have just threatened but as I am suddenly weary and because I can not for now escape from the destiny that awaits me I choose to settle back down with only the hope that the coming cycle of darkness will bring me at least a little comfort and healing.

### 3. 9

We are walking on the pathway that leads along the edge of the Raft with the waters of the mighty Ocean at our side when I look up to see that it is Saramis - daughter of Saramo - who is holding me by the hand.

I am still a youngster with my infant fur and I have to reach high to clasp her warm hand and I want to see her eyes but a dark shadow covers her face and the voice that I hear is familiar and comforting but it is not that of my mother.

“Look Tomas...” The voice is saying to me.

“...your father is there. He is coming to greet you.” But when I look to where she is pointing there are only dark shadows.

It is a gathering of very many dark shadows that are not cast upon the surface of the Raft because they stand up and walk as do the members of the troupe and as they approach us they loom over me as tall as Saramis does.

“Which of you is my father?” I ask of them and they all laugh and then together they all point to the Sky as they chant.

“I am your father. Come and let me hold you.”

And so I stand amongst them waiting for a pair of strong reliable hands to reach down and to lift me up and to support me because I want to be shown things that will help me to be a respected member of the troupe.

But the dark shadows shrink as all dark shadows do when the Sun reaches its high point in the Sky and I am left standing alone at the edge of the Raft and I am afraid because I have been taught that the cold and hungry sharks seek the flesh of all of us monkeys.

“What are you doing there alone?” I hear the female’s voice say as the form of Saramis hurries forwards to lift me so that she can carry me away to the comfort and safety of her chosen place.

Now I can clearly see her face and I have no doubts that it was not her that tricked me with the dark shadows that were not my father.

“It is only you that I trust.” I say. And then I determine that I am already awake and that I am recalling a dream-picture.

As I slowly let the chatter return to chase away the pictures remaining in my head my belly aches with sadness at the recall of my mother and of something more that I seem to have lost and which feels just as precious.

The Sun can not yet be seen but the Sky above the far horizon is getting bright with the colour that is so like that of the fur that my precious Dolfis has.

The sadness I feel becomes painful when I determine that the command to have me Removed from the Raft may be given sooner than I expect and that before this happens surely I must see my precious son Tofas once more and also my faithful mate who will need to hear the truth about what has gone so badly wrong for me.

I stand up and I stretch my limbs to feel how much pain I still have from my injuries and when I look around for the sentries that are guarding me I see that it is too soon for them to be awake and they remain undisturbed and asleep.

I carefully step past the nearest of them and I take the pathway that leads across the Raft towards the place that Dolfis and I chose to be ours and as I walk I watch the Sun rise up above the far horizon and I whisper a challenge to the great and wise God Gonamana to put a stop to this disobedience of mine and to show me His wrath or else I must truly question His power over me and that perhaps He has already abandoned me.

I do not let my injuries trouble me as I journey across the Raft and as I walk I choose to ignore the anxious faces of those who have woken up to find me away from my place of Separation and I am also regardless of the troupe members who watch me nervously when I stop to pick some yellow bananas to satisfy my hunger.

As I stoop down into a bed of yellow bananas my desire is to pick great armfuls of food to take as a gift and a tribute to she who was for so long my loyal mate but instead I pick only a few of the precious yellow fruits and I find myself saying a prayer of thanks to the Spirit of the Raft in the hope that I will be forgiven for denying the Raft a little of what we both must surely share.

As I pray the chatter in my head questions if the monkey ancestors have been false about any other wisdom that they have passed down to us and my belly tightens with anxiety as I question what falsities I may have passed on to the youngsters of the troupe in my teaching of them.

I continue on my way but now with many more questions about the words of

the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors and what they tell us about the great and wise God Gonamana and about His obedient Spirit servants and I determine that as my sleeping head is used only for the dream-pictures given to me by the Spirit of the Raft when the cycles of darkness are upon the Raft then surely I am of no further use to the other Spirits which could mean that they too have abandoned me.

I suddenly feel as if I have been freed from my discipline of obedience to the laws that govern me and all of my fellows and I feel fearless of any wrath or punishment sent by those that the troupe worships but as I approach the place where Dolfis and I were so happy together my feelings become that of intense disappointment because I see that already there is another adult male Brandip - son of Brandak - who is squatting down with Dolfis and Tofas and who is looking very comfortable and relaxed.

Brandip was Bonded with his own mate Suran - daughter of Yoran - not so many cycles of darkness and light since passed but it was declared by Wise Loomis that when she and the new young one that she was trying to birth were both Silenced it was by the will of the Spirit of the Clouds because the dark shadow of the Cloud-shade was then upon the Raft when they both passed from the troupe.

All my recent feelings seem to rise up inside me as I approach Brandip - son of Brandak - but rather than feeling angry about him I calmly determine that I want to hurt him because not only did I before witness him staring at Dolfis with eyes that displayed his lustful desires for her even before my Separation but also he was the leader of the mob that attacked me after Wise Loomis was Silenced.

They both see me walking towards them and they both quickly rise to their feet with Brandip putting his arm around the shoulder of Dolfis even as he is pulling Tofas behind him as if to protect my mate and my son from some sort of danger that I bring to them.

Seeing his hands touching them gives me such a pain in my belly that I can not hide my dislike of him when I say.

“Dolfis my precious mate and Tofas also. Be not afraid that I have returned to you for I have words that I must speak to you if you will but please listen to them. Brandip - son of Brandak - you will honour me by leaving. Your place is not here.”

Brandip eyes me carefully and responds by pulling Dolfis closer to him.

Dolfis is surely afraid but in her eyes I can see that she has not forgotten that before my Separation she was my faithful mate.

Tofas makes a whimpering sound.

“Brandip - son of Brandak - do you not hear the words that I say to you? I am Tomas - son of Tomag - and by my word I will always be a fellow this troupe. You will speak to me or you will depart now with your honour unquestioned. What is it to be?”

Brandip has surely heard some natter that has spoken of the threats that I made to the sentries that were guarding me and how I would use my powers to claim a savage revenge on those that would seek to harm me.

“Dolfis. Come to me...please.” I say holding out my hand.

But she does not move except to look at Brandip to see what he will do.

“No...” He says at last.

“...you are Separated and you should not be here. It is for you to leave for you are not our fellow.”

Brandip is not as tall as I am and the fear in his eyes is clear to see.

“Be gone NOW...!” I say very carefully to him.

“...or you will have your flesh separated from your chatter.” And I take a step towards them as I growl menacingly.

Dolfis cries out and she pushes Brandip away from her before she picks up Tofas who clings to her fur as he hides his face between her breasts. Then as she shakes with fear she faces Brandip.

“Be gone Brandip - son of Brandak...” She states boldly.

“...go before his powers are used again. For this is Tomas - son of Tomag - and I am his faithful mate here with his only precious son.”

I am so filled with joy at hearing these words that regardless of what might follow I take another step closer to Brandip while bearing my teeth as if to return the bites that he has already given to me.

His face displays how afraid he is as he turns and hurries away past the group of our fellows that have gathered at a safe distance from us so they can witness what is happening and after he has gone they continue to stare and to natter together as Dolfis proudly comes over to me and nuzzles her face into my fur and runs her fingers through my mane.

“You honour me greatly Dolfis - daughter of Dolfat...” I say with water in my eyes.

“...and together we will face the trouble that we have now made for

ourselves.” Both she and Tofas are trembling in my arms as she looks up at me.

“Tomas. You have made us all very afraid of you. But I believe that you will not harm your precious son and so I beg you not to leave us again.”

I hug them both and I silently vow that despite the purpose of the great and wise God Gonamana and His obedient Spirit servants nothing will stop me keeping these two precious fellows of mine close to me and safe.

And then without any regard to the distant natter that carries on around our chosen place I tell Dolfis of all that which did happen to me since I was last with her and I assure her that we must not give up hope of saving ourselves from whatever the wise and revered ones of the troupe may determine for us.

And then with her warmth against my body and with her smell in my nostrils I tell Dolfis that it can only be good for us if the troupe believes that I truly am dangerous and I tell her that every one of them must remain afraid of me so that when she is challenged she can say that she is protected by me and by the terrible powers that I used in the slaying of Wise Loomis.

Without questions she agrees with me and together we settle down to wait for what the wise and revered ones of the troupe might do and we do not let go of each other even as we welcome the waters of the Cloud-rain.

As we say together the prayer of thanks to the Spirit of the Clouds for its gift to us I grin and I speak it as I should despite that my belief in the words has been challenged and I determine that I will not tell Dolfis of my growing contempt for the laws and the duties that we have been taught by the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors and I purposely continue to behave as if I am truly obedient.

After the dark shadow of the Cloud-shade has passed from the Raft and we have finished grooming each other the chatter in my head tells me that Lord Simotan and Wise Jawtak together with the council of Elders will soon make a judgment and command an action against me even before the Sun has journeyed to the far horizon for the news of my return to Dolfis and my claim to belong again to the troupe will surely have reached their ears quickly.

I determine that I will go to Lord Simotan and there confront him with the news that a powerful Spirit now protects me and that I am not afraid of any member of the troupe and then I will instruct him that I have used the terrible powers that have been given to me to control of Dolfis who remains innocent of any Heresy and that I will surely take my vengeance on any who will threaten to harm her or Tofas or myself.

But I am not without a very tight feeling in my belly because the chatter in my head quickly tells me that I risk much for if I am challenged to prove my powers I will be exposed as speaking falsely but I determine that I surely have no other choice and this is my only chance to avoid punishment.

When Dolfis sees that I am greatly anxious she tries to comfort me but I tell her that I must go without any further delay to face up to Lord Simotan and so she looks at me longingly and tells me that she will pray that I will quickly and safely return to her.

Without any joy I take my leave and as I walk towards the place of the Alpha I start to fear what might happen to me and with the fear comes a need to rid myself of my waste.

I determine that I will visit the nearest place at the back of the Raft and that there I will display to any and to all who I meet that I am regardless of the command to have me Separated and that I am no threat to any who will treat me with the respect that I demand as their fellow.

I am stared at and nattered about but I am not challenged as I make my way to the back of the Raft and on arriving there I am at first not recognised by those who are already gathered to rid themselves of their waste because most of them have their backs to me while they natter intently with those others who are busy squatting down at the Raft's back edge.

Straight away I see that one of those who are squatting down is Brandip - son of Brandak - but he does not see me because he is intent on talking to Gordan - son of Gordak - who is squatting next to him and listening patiently.

Brandip is saying that when he was with Dolfis it was me the Separated Heretic who forced her to send him away and he starts to boast about how he will punish me if I do anything to harm her because it is Dolfis who he intends to take as his mate after my Removal from the Raft.

Gordan glances up and when he sees me he respectfully nods his head which is surely a sign that he has a regard for our former closeness as neighbours and friends but Brandip is still too busy with what he is saying to see me even as I approach the back edge of the Raft to join them.

I did not mean to seek any trouble with Brandip so soon after my first challenge to him and I ignore him while I try to show the others that the Heretic who has joined them intends to behave just as harmoniously as they are doing.

And then at last Brandip sees me but only when I have got quite close to where he is squatting and he is both surprised and frightened and he acts with

great speed as if he suddenly feels the need to protect himself.

He surely wants to get some distance between himself and me and as he quickly jumps up he does not recall that the skins of the yellow bananas that he has brought with him are right next to his feet.

He steps on them and he slips.

There is a brief moment when he almost keeps his balance but all too soon he pitches backwards and vanishes from sight.

There is a loud splash that straight away follows his disappearance which confirms to all of us watching that he has fallen from the back of the Raft.

He is gone from us so suddenly that I am confused as to what did truly happen and there is not a sound from any of us as we all gather at the edge of the Raft to witness with horror the cold and hungry sharks that rise up from the mighty Ocean's depths to break its surface waters in order to squabble over the warm flesh of this floundering and screaming monkey.

I am too surprised to feel any guilt or remorse about what did just happen and when I look at Gordan to see if I am to be accused of any wilfull wrong doing I see by the look on his face that he is trying to suppress a grin.

Even as the ripples that the cold and hungry sharks have made spread out across the surface of the waters of the mighty Ocean behind the Raft so the news of this Silencing starts to spread just as quickly as natter amongst the members of the troupe.

Without speaking I nod to Gordan and after picking up some empty skins of yellow bananas that I see lying at my feet I walk away along the pathway that leads across the back of the Raft to where I find another place to rid myself of my waste without any further trouble.

When I am alone and I am squatting down I wonder at the strange and frightening events that have been happening to me and the chatter in my head tells me that surely my destiny can no longer be ordered or cared for because the great and wise God Gonamana and His obedient Spirit servants have surely abandoned me because I have become no longer deserving of their concern.

I determine that I am now willing to rely on none but the Spirit of the Raft to guide me and that it is my supreme duty to observe the warning that it has given me about the destiny of the troupe and that I must not lose hope for surely that would only lead to a disaster of failure and loss.

The chatter in my head then tells me that my struggle to be heard has not got any easier and that I still do have but only one choice and that is to go to Lord



Simotan and to show him that even after witnessing such a tragic and grisly accident at the back of the Raft I have not been troubled by it because I am strengthened by the new powers that I now control.

Then I start the journey along the pathways that will lead me to the place of the Alpha and as I slowly walk and order in my head what I will say there when I arrive I see something that puzzles and amazes me.

All the members of the troupe that I encounter along the way have stopped performing their duties and they stand still while looking in my direction as if they were waiting for me.

And then when I pass them by they do not try to speak with me and they do not try to challenge or to curse me and they do not even furtively natter or whisper together about me.

All of them including adults and youngsters and despite them being male or female they all stare at me with reverence and awe and then they all either bow or they kneel down before me which I determine are both displays that not only is it their desire to be obedient to me but they also willingly choose to submit to my will.

### 3. 10

Lord Simotan is with Wise Jawtak and Parus - son of Patus - as I approach the place of the Alpha and they are silently watching the members of the troupe around them humbling themselves to me as I draw nearer.

Then I see hurrying towards me from another pathway is Marinat - daughter of Matinat - the Consort of Lord Simotan who is with Simolas and his brothers Simonas and Marotan - sons of Lord Simotan - and they can not hide their discomfort and their fear as they attempt to maintain a show of dignity.

They stop and they block the pathway ahead of me so that I must stop and listen to what they have come to say to me.

“Tomas...” Says Marinat in her clear high-toned voice which I can hear has a tremour in it.

“...we have heard the news of your vengeance against Brandip - son of Brandak - and if you seek to harm any more of us and especially my Lord Simotan then I beg you to stop.”

I have a fixed look of grim determination on my face to show that I am unafraid of anything and because I was not expecting to hear such a plea I try not to look surprised when I hear it spoken and I distract myself by staring intently at Marinat's finely groomed red fur shining with such elegance in the light from the Sun and at her small round breasts that have begun to sag but have not yet wrinkled.

Simolas is next to her and he is looking more serious than ever as he tries to make his young body appear taller and stronger than it truly is and I can not help but admire his bravery as he stands protectively in front of his younger brothers but he is swallowing hard and I can see that his legs are shaking.

Then the chatter in my head tells me that surely the troupe must believe that I sought out Brandip and that I Silenced him because of his desire for taking Dolfis as his mate just as they believe that I Silenced Wise Loomis because he

dismissed me and I determine also that those around me are bowing and kneeling to me because they fear that I have truly now mastered the terrible powers that I have been given.

I am saddened that Marinat can suggest that I would seek to hurt Lord Simotan but because she believes that I am now able to defeat a powerful Alpha such as Lord Simotan it fills me with joy and I suppress a laugh that I disguise as a grunt.

“Be not afraid Marinat - daughter of Matinat...” I say as I start to delight in this falsity.

“...I will not be angry with those that intend me no harm and who try not to defeat my purpose. Let me pass without bother and there truly shall be no trouble from me.”

Anxiously she and her sons stand aside and I walk along to Lord Simotan who is warning Parus to be careful because the chief Elder looks like he wants to challenge me.

“Be calm Parus - son of Patus...” Lord Simotan says while he rests his hand on the shoulder of his fellow.

“...let us listen for he has come only to speak with us. Is that not so?” He says turning to me.

“That is so Lord Simotan...” I reply.

“...I have come because I want to stop that which is a danger not only to the Raft but to us all and that which surely threatens to end our sacred journey even before the promised destination beyond the far horizon is reached.” Lord Simotan is clearly nervous but he remains calm and he says.

“It has been told to me that you summoned a cold and hungry shark to rise out of the waters of the mighty Ocean and that it took from the back of the Raft the flesh and the chatter of Brandip - son of Brandak - who you believe wronged you but who was our respected fellow. Is it not you that is a threat and a danger to the Raft and to us all with your continued Heresy? What is your intent?”

The chatter in my head tells me that this chance to gain my purpose will only be given to me once and that I must be very careful to keep my advantage.

“Just as it is your duty to protect the troupe from a threat and a danger Lord Simotan...” I say as I keep my eyes fixed on his.

“...it is for me to protect myself from any in the troupe that threatens me with harm or tries to stop me from my divine duty to save the sacred journey from

the disaster that will surely come. My purpose is to seek Inclusion and to claim the obedience of the troupe to my guidance. This I demand in the name of the great and wise God Gonamana - praise Him.”

And all together Lord Simotan and Wise Jawtak and Parus and I respond as we should by pointing to the Sky as we chant.

“Praise Him.”

Parus continues to stare at me disrespectfully and I see that not only does he doubt the matter that he has heard about me but also that he is not afraid if I choose to act against him. He speaks carefully.

“You say the words of respect to Him which is only right but are not your other words and actions those of one who has already been judged a Heretic?” And Lord Simotan raises his hand to Parus as a sign of caution before he turns to him and says quietly.

“Please. Parus. You have heard a truth spoken when it was said that it is my duty to protect the troupe. And that includes you so be at peace. I will not allow you or any of those that I command to be punished by a wrath that can wield this new and terrible power that has come to the Raft.” And turning back to face me he adds.

“So witness what I say Wise Jawtak and Parus - son of Patus - as I command that Tomas - son of Tomag - be Included into the troupe once more and that he has restored to him his name and his chosen place.”

I try not to show the joy that fills every part of me at hearing these words but I tell myself that I must not become distracted from what I can surely achieve from this glorious chance to gain even more.

“Truly you are a great leader Lord Simotan...” I say without falsity.

“...and I will surely serve you faithfully. But hear this all of you and be warned for I bear news of a challenge that we all must accept. We must surely now bravely question the security that we have enjoyed in obeying so strictly the sacred wisdom of the ancestors passed down to us by the words of their Troupe-Lore because truly another voice has spoken to me and it demands to be heard by us all.”

And I pause while I carefully examine their faces to see if the risk that I am taking is too great and that if by offending their long held beliefs in the taught truths of their lives I am being too bold.

But the chatter in my head tells me that after what has happened since the discovery of the first breach in the surface of the Raft they seem not completely

unprepared for at least one more shock and so I continue.

“This new voice that demands to be heard is a mighty power that will help to order anew the ways of the troupe. And it has chosen me as its messenger and its authority.”

Parus wants to speak but I raise a hand to him as a sign of caution just as Lord Simotan did before and I shout angrily.

“No! You will listen to me Parus - son of Patus - because it is I that has been told of the destiny of the troupe and it is only I that heeds the new voice that Wise Loomis did not hear even as he sought to protect you all.”

And because of my sudden display of rage their attention to what I am saying can not be greater and I suddenly feel as if I truly do have the new powers that I am said to now have.

I turn to Lord Simotan and I say more gently.

“I did at first fail to determine clearly the message that I was entrusted with and in the telling of it to the troupe I was seen to be as if lost from myself and I was judged as being a Heretic...” And I look down at the surface of the Raft to display my feelings of sorrow and remorse.

“...and then when the words at last found a home within me I tried but I failed to enlighten Wise Loomis who was chosen to be Silenced by my hand so that another would take his place.” Then I look up again and I scowl.

“I failed also to display any control over the terrible powers that I have been given when the many of the mob punished me at my place of exile and for all of these failures I have suffered with hurts to my flesh and with exile from my fellows.” And I pause so that I can raise my head as high as I am able before I say.

“But now I have learned to hear the purpose of what the new voice is telling me and I have learned how to master the terrible powers that it has given me to weald...” I look across at Wise Jawtak and I raise my voice.

“...so be warned by the fate of Wise Loomis and stand not in my way. For I have grown beyond the wisdom and the abilities of your fellow that you once named Novice Tomas. I will no longer accept the duties of an apprentice for my destiny now demands much more from the troupe...” And then I grin and I nod and I lower my voice.

“...you will all now respect me as Wise Tomas.”

### 3. 11

There are none that challenge the commands that are soon spoken by Lord Simotan to the rest of my fellows that not only allow my Inclusion back into the troupe but also demand that I be given the duties and the responsibilities of their Spirit-Guide and Jawtak - son of Jawtan - does not question his dismissal as Wise Jawtak when he obediently returns to being a revered member of the council of Elders just as my first guidance is willingly accepted which requires that they all must wait patiently to hear about what the new voice will demand of them.

And the troupe does wait patiently as I carefully determine what the Spirit of the Raft has been telling me and what new laws will best control the greed that threatens the Raft and after hearing my further guidance the wise and revered ones of the troupe then carefully prepare their fellows for much that will be new that they must learn just as there will be much of the old wisdom that they must question and dismiss.

It is only my precious Dolfis that does not fear me for the terrible new powers that I am now believed to wield but even as the troupe learns that they need not kneel before me to show me the respect that I demand I find that Dolfis is humbled with remorse that she let Brandip get so close to her in my absence when I was Separated and in exile.

I tell her that she is truly forgiven and because none in the troupe now seems willing to approach the given place of the Spirit-Guide she is the only one of my fellows that I share my wisdom with as I determine what the Spirit of the Raft surely needs so that its precious domain is protected from the foolishness that threatens its survival.

Dolfis hears from me about how there will be a great change that must come to the Raft that will be named the start of the New-Ways and how new laws will ensure that the picking of yellow bananas will be strictly controlled and that a

limit on birthings will reduce how the troupe now grows so many in number.

And as each cycle of light comes to pass my faithful mate listens as I tell her the words of what we will all soon learn and pass on as the New-Ways and Troupe-Lore of Old which will replace the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors and because she is only too joyful that with my authority over the troupe we are once again together she does not fear or question what I say even as she hears about how the troupe's obedience to the new laws will be enforced.

As each cycle of darkness comes to pass the dream-pictures that I am able to recall are many and often confusing but I welcome all that is told to me by the Spirit of the Raft and at last I arrange to gather with Lord Simotan and with the council of Elders to tell them of the words of the New-Ways and Troupe-Lore of Old.

"My precious Dolfis..." I say as I prepare to visit the given place of the Alpha.

"The last cycle of darkness so soon passed has shown me something that I can not yet determine despite that now I am truly sure that the Spirit of the Raft has favoured us all by sharing with me the wisdom that we all need." And I lift up Tofas so that I can hug him to me and he giggles as I then pass him into the arms of my precious mate.

"I saw Saramis that my eyes witnessed when I was a infant..." I tell Dolfis as I recall the dream-pictures.

"...and she was surrounded by dark shadows that would not let me take milk from her." Tofas is suddenly very still and he stares quietly at me as if he truly determines everything that I am saying.

"Saramis quickly became very old and her breasts were sagged as if they were empty..." I continue with a feeling that water is coming to my eyes.

"...and her flesh seemed to shrink as a breach in the surface of the Raft opened up and swallowed her." Dolfis too is still and quiet as she listens to my words.

"And all the tall dark shadows stood around the breach and they chanted but the words did not find a home within me and I was sad to be without her that should hold me and feed me and protect me."

But then I must leave our chosen place and with Dolfis and my precious Tofas quietly staring along the pathway after me I set off to the place of the Alpha with the chatter in my head picturing Saramis as I recall her singing so beautifully and dancing so skilfully with her face displaying a grin that is giving

so much joy to all of her fellows.

And then I hear a chant that sounded in the dream-picture when the troupe was watching Saramis as she celebrated her skills and I see in my head again the dark shadows standing around a mighty breach in the surface of the Raft and the only words from the chant that I can determine are.

“Beloved Raft. Beloved mother. Beloved Raft. Beloved mother.”



### 3. 12

“Respected Alpha and revered Elders...” I say as I stand with all of the most important leading members of the troupe gathered before me.

“...there have been many cycles of darkness and light that have since passed after it was believed in error that we were witnessing the Omens that were falsely foretold by the wisdom passed down to us from the ancestors and they have not passed without showing us that we are all just small and weak monkeys that are foolish in the eyes of the great and wise God Gonamana - Praise Him.” And as one they all respond together as they should.

“Praise Him indeed.” I add.

I have to suppress my joy that by naming Him I can so easily rely on their unquestioned obedience and I quietly marvel at how I now have no fear of His influence over me while the others still fear His wrath that can be so readily promised.

Before I continue I look up at the clear blue Sky and at the bright yellow disc of the Sun as it travels up from the far horizon and I suppress a grin as I recall my journey here to the given place of the Alpha where I have demanded the attendance of Lord Simotan and the full council of Elders where they are to receive my guidance about the destiny of the troupe.

I am amused because as I walked here I was pursued by Gordan - son of Gordak - who has long since been feeling remorseful since the Silencing of Brandip - son of Brandak - when he was seen to slip and fall from the back of the Raft.

Gordan very much needed to ask me for guidance about the feelings of joy that he felt when Brandip was Silenced and he also questioned if he could be forgiven for speaking falsely the news that spread so quickly that told of him witnessing that I wilfully summoned up from the waters of the mighty Ocean a cold and hungry shark to snatch Brandip away from the surface of the Raft and

that the terrible powers that I did wield were truly awesome.

I chose not to display to Gordan my true feelings of joy as I reassured him that he was surely guided to speak such matter by the Spirits that order our lives and that if he faithfully does not speak of it again he will be blessed as a true servant of our troupe's sacred destiny.

"And it is our hope that the sacrificing of our fellows Loomis - the Wise - and Brandip - son of Brandak - shall not be soon forgotten" I tell the patient and seemingly humble gathering of wise and revered ones of the troupe.

And I then scowl and I pause so that my fellows will linger on the recall of the terrible powers that I am said to have already demonstrated and how I have made all of the troupe now fear and respect me greatly.

"The cycles of light yet to pass..." I then add.

"...will offer us only one chance to prove that we honour the decreed passing from the troupe of our unfortunate fellows and we must show without failing how we truly have the worth to be His chosen ones." And I pause again before I say slowly and carefully.

"To fail Him now would make us no better than the mortal creatures of the ancient forest that determined not how to respect Him and who have long since perished. We must not make that same mistake. Please be comfortable with me and I will tell you of my guidance about what will yet pass for us monkeys in His great Creation."

I carefully smooth my fur and I slowly arrange my tail with a display of great dignity to show how much I surely deserve the respect that I demand from this gathering and I squat down facing my fellows so that I can begin my guidance to them.

"Our sacred journey has been long and the troupe has thrived..." And I look round at the faces in front of me to see if any of them show a willingness to challenge me.

"...even as we were obedient and faithful to the wisdom of our ancestors and we honoured and worshipped the great and wise God Gonamana - praise Him."

"Praise Him." I let them respond.

"And we have surely grown many as we did heed the ancient words spoken by those who were first upon the Raft...but now a new voice demands to be heard..." And I run my fingers through my mane of red fur before I say.

"...for a Spirit has been hidden from us as it has slept for all of the very many cycles of darkness and light that have long since passed after He washed away

the ancient forest and He covered over the sacred mountains with the waters of the mighty Ocean...” There is a movement amongst the members of the council of Elders as they start to look at each other with anxious looks.

“...but this Spirit has now awaked because it needs to tell us of a different wisdom that our monkey ancestors could not have spoken of. A voice with a new wisdom that must now order our lives even as His obedient Spirit servants yield to a greater authority.” And I can determine that for many of the gathering before me there is too much of what I say that does not find a home within them and they start to fidget and whisper together.

“You must heed what I will tell you...” I say speaking louder.

“...for we have travelled beyond where the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors will sustain us and we will only endure if we are guided by the New-Ways that the new Spirit will teach us.”

“New-Ways...?” Says Lord Simotan looking humbled as if giving such Heresy a name will only bring down the wrath of the great and wise God Gonamana upon the speaker.

“...and how can you speak of a new Spirit?” He truly looks shocked and afraid but before he or any of the others are able to speak I jump up so that now I am looking down on them all.

“Yes...” I say loudly and clearly.

“...there is a new Spirit and we shall abide by the words of the New-Ways and Troupe-Lore of Old that it has taught to me and the troupe will be saved from the foolishness of those who would cling to the ignorance of the ancestors....” And I raise my arms as if to embrace them all and I speak louder still.

“...and we shall not doubt that this new pathway which we must now follow will be the righteous one because it is the Spirit of the Raft who will guide us”.

And I grin as I look down at the many puzzled and clearly shocked faces of my fellows as they yak and seek to question each other.

“And because He has now taken this Spirit to his side so that She may rule over us as His Consort it is for us to obey Her even as She nurtures us with a loving strictness.”

And I point a finger at each one of them in turn and I say.

“Which of you will challenge the Spirit of the Raft to prove that She does not hold your fragile lives within Her gift. And which of you will test the power and the resolve of Her obedient servant that stands before you?”

## **4. RESOLUTION**

## 4. I

The Sun had only just risen above the far horizon at the start of its journey across the clear blue Sky when I started my long walk along the familiar pathway that leads around the edge of the Raft and the early warmth that I now feel on my face brings me some little comfort after the last cycle of darkness since passed when my sleep was again troubled by yet another awakening when I recalled some strange and disturbing dream-pictures about the gathering of many mysterious and threatening dark shadows that was surely not some guidance from the Spirit of the Raft.

As I walk I try not to brood about my tiredness and the constant dull pain from the stiffness in the base of my tail and instead I distract myself with the view that looks out across the still blue surface of the mighty Ocean that fills all of Creation around me with its calm flat waters stretching out to the far horizon in every direction and I cheer myself by gazing upon the marvelous sight of the seemingly endless open space upon the Raft itself with its shallow covering of yellow bananas that sprout up from across the surface of its vast level expanse.

I am glad of the fellowship that I am able to share with the members of the troupe that I meet on my way but their polite greetings and their dutiful natter lacks the joy that I recall hearing from my fellows in the cycles of light long since passed and before my appointment as their Spirit-Guide and the coming of the New-Ways.

And now with the Sun high up in the clear blue Sky above the far horizon I approach the place of my only precious son Novice Tofas who has gathered before him some of the youngsters of the troupe as they attentively squat down and show him the respect that he is entitled to as an adult and a teacher while he speaks to them of the words of the New-Ways and Troupe-Lore of Old that must be passed on to them in their turn.

He has not yet seen me because he is facing away from the pathway that I am

using and so I stop and I quietly listen to him speaking of the story that is told about me when I was grown to be a Bonded adult as Novice Tofas is now and how in the many cycles of darkness and light long since passed before the birthing of them all I came to hear the words of prophesy that would save the troupe from a great disaster.

“...then your destiny too will be lost and so will be the joys and the rewards that will come in the sharing of all that Creation can offer...” Novice Tofas is saying.

“...but this message was not at first heard by those that should have had the wisdom to guide the troupe and it was then for Wise Tomas to be tested and made to suffer so that his purpose was strengthened and his voice made clear.”

And the youngsters continue to listen to Novice Tofas with great care even as they try not to grin because they see me standing behind him with a serious look on my face while I wink and I stroke my long white beard.

“And my voice spoke of She who would be listened to...” I then say so as to announce my arrival to them all.

“...and we maintain our duty to Her still.”

“Wise Tomas...” Novice Tofas says as he stands up while turning to greet me.

And the youngsters all jump up too and they bow their heads to me as they should and they give me the sign of Offering using their hands which is a display to show me their desire for sharing a gift that before the coming of the New-Ways would have been the giving of yellow bananas.

“...please come and be comfortable with us. You would honour us greatly.” He adds showing me a place next to him.

“Novice Tofas...” I say as I step forward.

“...I do not want to be a bother to the teaching that you give but if the youngsters would hear more of my bringing the New-Ways to order us all when the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors were spoken anew by the Spirit of the Raft then I am willing to tell of it.”

Their delight is easy to see and so I slowly and carefully squat down with as much dignity as I can manage because of the trouble that I now have with a constant dull pain coming from the stiffness in the base of my tail and I then smooth down the fur in my mane which is now as much grey as red and which also has many white hairs like those of my long white beard.

The youngest in the gathering giggle nervously because I seem to be so slow

in squatting down and they are hushed by Novice Tofas who then tells them that they should have more respect for their Spirit-Guide who is so greatly revered and that they should feel favoured indeed that I have chosen to speak to them.

I wink and I say that although laughter and joy is truly welcomed by the Spirit of the Raft they should also learn to show their regard when it is due and the chatter in my head again tells me that for as long as the words of the New-Ways and Troupe-Lore of Old are dutifully passed on then the name of Wise Tomas will always belong to the most worthy of all Spirit-Guides and that I will surely be spoken of with the greatest respect by all of the generations of monkeys yet to come.

I look around at all the excited young faces staring back at me and I recall that before I was apprenticed to Wise Loomis in my turn it was to me that the young ones of the troupe would come and I picture the looks of all the young brothers and sisters that would gather together before me and I determine how it is so different now since the New-Ways and Troupe-Lore of Old demand that only a single new young one can be birthed to each Bonded couple.

One of the eager youngsters in the gathering before me is Toomas - daughter of Novice Tofas - and I give thanks that she was birthed before my own faithful mate was Silenced and that Dolfis was able to see my only son grow to be an adult with a new young one of his own.

I look at Toomas and then at her father and I recall without joy how Dolfis felt such sadness in her duty not to birth a brother or a sister for our only precious Tofas and I also recall how her special care for Toomas was ended when she suddenly passed from the troupe leaving me to determine that Dolfis was Silenced by the Spirit of the Sky even as she was passing on to Toomas the steps of the ancient dances that she had learned so well in her turn from my father's loyal mate Saramis.

Squatting down next to Toomas is Marolan - son of Marotan - a youngster that was chosen by Lord Simolas himself to mentor and protect Toomas and because Marolan is the son of our new Alpha's younger brother it was determined that Novice Tofas and his precious mate Roomis - daughter of Roomas - were truly honoured even as Lord Simolas mourned the passing from the troupe of his father Lord Simotan.

As Toomas grins at me respectfully I determine that it was only right that I chose her mother Roomis to Bond with Novice Tofas and I recall how her father Roomas did so honour his own father Loomas – son of Loomat – when he

continued the pleading that the good name of Wise Loomis should be restored and the youngest son of Loomat recalled with respect.

And so Toomas and her mentor Marolan squat quietly next to each other as they wait for me to speak and I can not help but picture briefly how I saw Marolan's father before the coming of the New-Ways and the passing of so many cycles of darkness and light when he hid behind his elder brother Simolas as their mother Marinat begged me not to hurt Lord Simotan after the Silencing of Brandip at the back of the Raft.

I nod respectfully to Marolan and I suppress my desire to grin as I then recall how I have influenced and controlled not only the actions of Marolan's father Marotan and the choice of Marotan's mate Jilan - daughter of Gordan - but also the actions of Marotan's brothers - Simonas and Lord Simolas.

"It was even before the breaches came to scar our precious Raft that a Spirit with a new voice was awakening..." I say to the gathering of youngsters before me.

"...and Her sleep was ended as She felt the pains that Her domain was suffering with the passing of all those cycles of darkness and light when the troupe flourished and grew to be so many. And because none would hear Her plea to end our Heresy of Greed She sent a guidance to me because of my powers that are truly greater than my fellows." And then I look reassuringly at Toomas as I add.

"But it was Wise Loomis that chose to nurture the special gift that his great wisdom saw in me and he took me as his Novice until my powers of guidance grew greater than his and the Spirit of the Raft came again to me with a warning of the danger to the sacred journey." And I run my fingers through my mane before I continue.

"But none would hear the guidance that I then determined and I was shunned by the troupe and made to suffer greatly. But I could not fail the Spirit of the Raft for She was taken to be the Consort of the great and wise God Gonamana - praise Him." And with great joy all the youngsters eagerly respond together by pointing to the Sky as they shout out.

"Praise Him."

I pause as I quietly enjoy again having the troupe so willingly submissive at my speaking of His name.

"And She promised Him that I was to be trusted with the terrible powers that Her obedient servant would need so that I could guide the troupe even as it



sought in its ignorance to destroy itself.” Again I pause as I watch the youngsters who wait eagerly for what I am to say next and I nod wisely before I continue.

“And with the sacrifice of Loomis the wise and Brandip the malign I took my true place amongst His chosen ones and I made as if a new Sun had risen with the truth of the New-Ways that shines upon us still and lights our way to the promised destination beyond the far horizon.”

And I reach behind me to move my tail and so ease the dull pain that has grown since I squatted down.

The young male named Fargat - son of Fartec - signs that he wants to speak and I nod that he is allowed.

“Most Wise Tomas...” He begins fearlessly.

“...can we hear how it is to wield such terrible powers as you have?” And without any delay Novice Tofas hushes him.

“Fargat - son of Fartec...” He then says angrily.

“...do not be so bold as to question Wise Tomas about his powers. You will soon feel his wrath if you anger him.” And he turns to me and lowers his head.

“Wise Tomas. We beg your forgiveness.”

I scowl and I stare hard at Fargat who now is not so brave as he looks down at the surface of the Raft and starts to shake.

Squatting next to Fargat is Skyglo - daughter of Sunaglo - and she puts her arm around him as she whispers something into his ear that seems to puzzle him because he briefly glances back at me before he turns to her so that he can hide his face in the fur under her chin.

Skyglo looks into my eyes but I do not feel disrespected because I admire her even as she matures into becoming a clever young adult female who has taken upon herself the duty of caring for many of the youngsters of the troupe which is why she has joined this gathering despite her soon being grown enough to be chosen for Bonding.

I also admire that Skyglo is quick to learn and that she never seems to lack the right words to say when she natters with her fellows and with her large black eyes that glint and sparkle she has always been able to quickly and calmly observe all that happens around her and she does not shun those many males in the troupe with eyes that betray their lustful desires for her that they can not easily suppress.

There are not so many cycles of darkness and light since passed after Skyglo

started her cycles of seed-blood and her breasts have grown large and firm like those of Monatus - daughter of Monaglo - who is the sister of Skyglo's father that I recall was always a favourite of mine when I was the Novice to Wise Loomis.

"I did not wield my terrible powers to bring myself pleasure and there was both joy and pain..." I say looking at Fargat and Skyglo before adding.

"...but surely all that we do as a duty to the troupe brings us joy."

But Skyglo just stares at me with her eyes fixed on mine as if she is expecting me to cause her some harm and I can not help but feel shocked and I try to determine where I have seen before that look of fear and contempt that she has on her face and I recall a dream-picture that showed me things that truly did not happen because I was forcing myself onto Monatus - daughter of Monaglo - at her Ceremony of Bonding when she was to take as her mate Hadwin - son of Hadwik.

The long since passed dream-picture showed Monatus trying without success to push me away as I mounted her but I was too strong and full of lustful desires and I only became more determined as it also showed that many members of the troupe were gathered around as they grinned and encouraged me.

"Wise Tomas..." The sound of Skyglo's voice ends the disturbing recall of the dream-picture in my head.

"...it surely can not bring joy when a fellow is Silenced despite the need to punish. And I pray that the ceremony of Removal which rids the Raft of those judged for their Heresy of Greed does not bring joy to any of us." She adds and then she grins as if to reassure me that her words were not spoken with disrespect.

Novice Tofas turns to Skyglo because he has also surely heard something bold in what she has said but I hold my hand up to stop him from speaking and instead I return her grin.

"The words of the New-Ways and Troupe-Lore of Old are not difficult to determine Skyglo - daughter of Sunaglo..." I say without kindness.

"...and those of the troupe that choose another discipline must not be allowed to challenge the achievement of our sacred journey. Obedience is demanded and our laws will be obeyed."

And then because I suddenly feel anxious and without joy at what has been said I carefully stand up and I smooth the fur of my tail.

"And now I must return to my duties." I say formally.

The youngsters all jump up to thank me and I nod to show my gratitude for the sign of Offering that they all give me and then I walk away towards the given place of the Spirit-Guide.

I find that I am angry because Skyglo did speak so disrespectfully about the ceremony of Removal that must always be attended by the Spirit-Guide of the troupe and I am also bothered that she seemed to question if I found joy whenever I have been obliged to witness those judged for their Heresy of Greed being gifted to the cold and hungry sharks.

I try not to let my anger dwell within me and instead as I journey across the Raft I look to my fellows and I determine that only a few of them that I greet along the way can truly recall when there was less fear and frustration to endure even in the cycles of light before the coming of the New-Ways when the laws of the troupe were not so hard to obey and the ceremony of Removal was a ritual that none had witnessed.

Looking up I see that the Sun will soon reach its high point in the Sky and as I walk the pathways between the beds of yellow bananas I admire how bountiful and ripe the precious fruits look as they attempt to hide the many bare places in their midst where the breaches in the surface of the Raft have healed but have left behind their ugly scars.

Then I grin as I recall how I decreed that these barren shallow holes be named as Pools of Hurt because they fill with the waters of the Cloud-rain when the dark shadow of the Cloud-shade is upon the Raft and how I did tell the troupe that they will make us always recall the water that flowed from the eyes of the Spirit of the Raft as She suffered from our foolishness and Heresy of Greed.

But for now all of the Pools of Hurt are empty because the waters of the Cloud-rain that did last fall have all been absorbed into the fabric of the Raft even after the troupe obediently gave its thanks for the guidance of the words of the New-Ways and Troupe-Lore of Old so that the eyes of the Spirit of the Raft could be dried and Her pain eased.

When I reach the place of the Spirit-Guide I am pleased that my earlier tiredness has gone from me but the dull pain from the stiffness in the base of my tail is still a great bother and I find myself scowling because I arrive to find a visitor who is waiting to seek my guidance.

It is Cablac - daughter of Cablot - who needs to be told about which of the Spirits will be her mating-guardian but when she sees the look on my face she

offers to return after the waters of the Cloud-rain have fallen when my guidance might be more joyfully given.

I tell her that she should stay because when the dark shadow of the Cloud-shade has passed from the Raft I am going to the place of the Alpha where I will meet with Lord Simolas and the council of Elders so that we can make a judgment upon an adult male who before he was commanded as being Separated was named Bantog - son of Sintog.

The Separated one has not yet displayed any desire to reform and because of his continuing foolishness and Heresy of Greed he faces a dreadful punishment.

## 4. 2

I am very proud that the Spirit of the Raft chose me to hear Her wisdom and I am also very proud of the great efforts that I have made to bring the words of the New-Ways and Troupe-Lore of Old to the hearing of my fellows because since the coming of the New-Ways when the many false and foolish words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors were suppressed we have all learned to obey the strict disciplines that order the picking of yellow bananas and this has saved both the Raft and its journey from the threat of disaster.

What the words of the New-Ways and Troupe-Lore of Old command is that not only must all members of the troupe take many fewer yellow bananas from the Raft when they are feeding but also now none of us may feast at celebrations and no precious yellow fruits are allowed as offerings or tributes.

We also ensure that by obeying the commands of the laws of the New-Ways and Troupe-Lore of Old there are fewer bellies to feed with the precious yellow bananas because now no Bonded pair already with a youngster is then allowed to birth another new young one and the duty of mating is always strictly controlled.

And so it is through our obedience to these new laws which govern us that the troupe has given both the Raft and ourselves a chance of enduring and those few weaker members of the troupe who are not able to be so obedient are judged in their turn as being a harm to their fellows and a danger to their precious home and they face a dreadful punishment.

It is a group of wise and revered members of the troupe named the council of Apportion that determine how many yellow bananas each member of the troupe is allowed to take for their nourishment just as it is also their duty to determine when Bonded adults are allowed to mate and any fellow that fails to be obedient to their rulings is accused of the Heresy of Greed which the words of the New-Ways and Troupe-Lore of Old tell us is greatly offensive to the Spirit of the Raft

and so surely invites the wrath of the great and wise God Gonamana Himself who can only be appeased by the conclusion of the ceremony of Removal.

The monkey who was named Bantog - son of Sintog - before his Separation has already disobeyed the council of Apportion by taking more yellow bananas than were his ration and even after many warnings in his exile he has not reformed himself and so I have come to the place of the Alpha to guide Lord Simolas and the council of Elders about their next judgment upon him.

“Wise Tomas...” Says Gordan - son of Gordak - the chief Elder of the council.

“...he who was named Bantog - son of Sintog - remains disordered and a threat to us all. Many have witnessed that he wilfully continues to take from the Raft that which the council of Apportion do not allow him. We accuse him of disobedience. We accuse him of disrespect. We accuse him of foolishness that is most dangerous to us all and we accuse him of the Heresy of Greed.” Gordan pauses as he looks to each member of the council of Elders before he then turns back to me and adds.

“Wise Tomas. Are you in agreement with us that this must not go unpunished and that we must judge him now as being beyond the redemption that any of His obedient servants here upon our precious Raft can help him achieve?”

I nod solemnly and I turn to Lord Simolas who is standing beside me with his powerful shoulders slumped forward and his sad eyes looking out from under his jutting brow.

“Lord Simolas. It is for you to make the commandment.” I say to him and we all wait for his weary reply.

“Yes. That is so Wise Tomas. And it was my father Lord Simotan who taught me that obedience must always be demanded.”

As I listen to his words the chatter in my head tells me that if his father had not passed from the troupe and he was here now to witness how I have used my authority to order his son for all the cycles of light since he became the Alpha in his turn then surely he would not approve of Lord Simolas being so obedient to my demands.

“And despite that it grieves me to punish so cruelly as it also did Lord Simotan before me even unto his Silencing...” As he speaks he lifts up his head so that his voice is louder and better heard.

“...I will ensure that the words of the New-Ways and Troupe-Lore of Old will be obeyed and I command that the accused shall be judged as the worst of all Heretics. He will be Removed from the Raft even before the next cycle of

darkness is upon us.” And then he sighs as he glances across at me.

“And may it be an example to us all.”

The words of the New-Ways and Troupe-Lore of Old instruct the troupe that the ceremony of Removal must be held at the place of rituals at the back of the Raft but unlike the ceremony for the Silenced it is for all members of the troupe to choose whether to attend or not and most fellows that have no ceremonial duties to perform prefer to stay away.

And so when the Sun has travelled much of its journey to the far horizon I slowly walk without company to the place of rituals where I gather with Lord Simolas and Novice Tofas who together with a few chosen members of both the council of Elders and the council of Apportion are all waiting for my arrival so that the ceremony of Removal can begin.

The condemned monkey is brought to us from the given place of Separation where he has been guarded by sentries and it causes a whispered nattering amongst those in the several small groups that have gathered at the margins of the place of rituals to witness the punishment enforced.

The sentries give over their charge to the Deed-servers who are large adult males that have no difficulty in holding him as close as they can to the back edge of the Raft despite the woeful effort that he makes to release himself from their grasp.

He is whimpering and without control over himself and in his desperation and fear he starts to rid himself of his waste which makes several of the witnesses turn away and the nostrils of the Deed-servers start to twitch.

I glance across at Gordan - son of Gordak - who is standing close to me and then at Bawtak - son of Jawtak - the deputy chief of the council of Elders who has his hand up to his face as if to protect it from the smellw of brown waste that now reaches us all.

Standing close to me is the respected Deed-master Brandas - son of Brandak - who nods his head in my direction before he slowly walks across to the back edge of the Raft where he carefully avoids the mess at his feet and he prepares to speak the short dedication that must be spoken at this ceremony.

Before I give Brandas the sign for the ceremony to begin I look around at the groups of witnesses that have chosen to attend and the chatter in my head questions if they have come out of respect for the laws of the New-Ways or if they have come to seek some sort of pleasure just as Skyglo suggested by witnessing a fellow Silenced by the cold and hungry sharks.

A few of the adults have brought their youngsters with them who seem uncomfortable as they witness what is happening but it is Skyglo herself who I stare at when I see that she has also come to watch together with Simolan - son of Lord Simolas - and she is whispering to him until she sees that I am looking at them both.

Seeing her standing there makes me feel disrespected again and so I turn away angrily and I sign to Brandas that he should start the ceremony.

“You have displayed to us that you have the purpose and the determination to behave as you should...” Brandas says as he turns his face with its short beard of white hair towards the struggling prisoner.

“...for the words of the New-Ways and Troupe-Lore of Old were taught to you and you did not heed them. The council of Apportion was generous to you and you denied their favour. You were of this troupe and now you no longer have a name or a place. You were not obedient and now you are to be Removed from the Raft. May the great and wise God Gonamana - praise Him...” And he waits while we all respond as we should.

“...may He be appeased at the sight of this ceremony and may the Spirit of the Raft witness our true regret as the Spirit of the Ocean accepts our gift of this Heretic who is condemned for his Greed.”

And with a command from Lord Simolas the Deed-servers lift the desperately agitated monkey up by his arms and as he starts to howl as loudly as he can they turn and drop him from the back of the Raft.

I listen for the sound of the splash that is quickly followed by the sound of the cold and hungry sharks moving about in the waters of the mighty Ocean and then when there is quiet again I begin to say the words of the prayer that must be spoken.

Brandas waits for me to finish before he performs his final duty as Deed-master by solemnly staring down from the back of the Raft after which he turns to me and he declares in a quiet voice that the ceremony is over.

The first of my fellows that I thank for their attendance is Brandas and from the look that his sad wet eyes give me and from the modest bowing of his head I see that he surely still recalls with regret what the words of the New-Ways and Troupe-Lore of Old speak of as the malign and regrettable actions of his brother Brandip.

After thanking the others I walk away and I choose a pathway which is close to where Skyglo and Simolan are standing and as I go I return the polite nods of



respect that they both give me but I am puzzled to see that he has a look of contempt in his eyes while she has water coming from hers.

I walk on regardless and without delay until I return to my given place where I settle down alone and I pray to the Spirit of the Raft as I await the coming of the cycle of darkness and the comfort that sleep will surely bring me.

### 4. 3

It is not often now that I awaken to see the pale blue disc of the Moon travelling the darkened Sky but as the chatter slowly returns to my head I determine that I am no longer sleeping despite that the Sun has yet to bring its light and its warmth to the Raft.

I am recalling dream-pictures that even the pain in the base of my tail does not distract me from and they are showing me things that are strange and disturbing which is surely not any guidance from the Spirit of the Raft.

I squat in the gloom and I feel chilled as I order the pictures that I can still see in my head which show me that I am standing at the place of Rituals where two very large Deed-servers hold me securely as they grin and sneer into my face.

They ask me why I do not use my terrible powers to free myself from their grasp but I am weak and helpless which only makes them grin more cruelly while they grip my arms even tighter.

A short distance behind me are the waters of the mighty Ocean and in front of me I can see across the place of rituals to where Skyglo suddenly appears with Simolan mounted upon her as he carefully mates with her but she is patiently staring up at me with a look of hatred on her face as she ignores him.

When Simotan has finished with her she stands up and points an accusing finger at me.

“I saw you...” She shouts.

“...it was you that fed our great and wise God Gonamama to the cold and hungry sharks and it was you that denied His obedient Spirit servants when they begged you not to Remove Him from the Raft.”

And behind Skyglo appears Lord Simolas who is looking confident and brave and he too grins at me as he steps forward to put his arm around Skyglo so that she can hear without error his calm steady voice.

“This Heresy will surely be punished. Give the command my precious one.”

And straight away Skyglo calls out.

“Remove him!”

The Deed-servers release my arms but I remain helpless as they pull at my tail and drag me backwards to the edge of the Raft and because there is brown waste beneath my feet I slip very easily.

Then I see that Skyglo is staring at my seed-limb that has grown large so that it points straight out from between my legs and she whispers something to Simolan and they both grin.

“You are the fools...” I cry out to them.

“...your great and wise God Gonamana laughs at you and I laugh at you too. If only you would hear a chatter in your heads that tells you of a true and better way...” I urgently plead as I am pulled towards the edge of the Raft.

“...and you all found a wisdom that freed you from the need to be ruled. You need not laws and you need not to fear punishment if you only showed your own greatness to each other.”

But there is no response and I find myself facing the far horizon from where we have journeyed and I am staring down at the waters of the mighty Ocean where upon its surface I can see my shadow stretched out like the tall dark shadow of my father and beneath it I can see the teeth of a cold and hungry shark that grins as it waits patiently for me to fall into its open mouth.

“You used a terrible power but now you have none...” Says Skyglo very formally.

“...the troupe showed you respect but you deceived them. You had a given place upon the Raft but that has been taken from you.” And with a sudden strong push in the middle of my back I feel myself sent sprawling from the safety of my precious home.

“May the great and wise God Gonamana be appeased.”

I seem to fall a great distance before I reach the waters of the mighty Ocean where the teeth of the cold and hungry shark bite hard around my tail and my head becomes empty of chatter and a darkness surrounds me.

Then I am awakened again and when I open my eyes the darkness has been replaced by the light from the Sun that is rising up from the far horizon.

I feel anxious and confused when the chatter returns to my head because the pain in the base of my tail feels so much like the bite from a cold and hungry shark and I recall that I again witnessed the Moon as it travelled the darkened Sky.

I stand up and I slowly walk around my given place until the early warmth from the Sun has cheered me and then I pick my ration of yellow bananas which I slowly eat as I determine what my duties will be while this cycle of light is upon the Raft.

I have none of my fellows come to visit me as the Sun rises higher up from the far horizon but then I am filled with joy to welcome Novice Tofas to my given place who arrives with his faithful mate Roomis and his daughter Toomas to share with me the natter of the troupe.

I am always pleased to have the fellowship of Novice Tofas because he is a clever and very gentle monkey who has gained the respect of the troupe not only with his polite manner and the chatter in his head that truly does not confuse him but also because those many who seek his guidance are all made to feel very well regarded.

He did not grow to be tall like I did but his mane flourishes greatly with fur of the same yellow colour that Dolfis had and it brings me much joy to recall his mother whenever I see him and I picture how proud my faithful mate was whenever she groomed him after the waters of the Cloud-rain had fallen.

It has always been an honour to teach Novice Tofas the wisdom that I myself have learned and he will surely soon become an Adept himself not only with the words of the New-Ways and Troupe-Lore of Old but also with many of the skills of Spirit-Guidance which he is mastering with great care in the many cycles of light that have now passed since before his ceremony of Adulthood when I appointed him as my apprentice.

What I have chosen not to teach Novice Tofas is that I have long since passed believed that the great and wise God Gonamana is a falsity and that He surely does not rule the destiny of the journey that we make because the only guiding Spirit is She that orders the Raft and I have chosen not to share with him this obvious Heresy because I do not want to challenge the loyalties that he has both to me and to the troupe.

After some polite natter with Novice Tofas and his faithful mate I say to Roomis that I must speak with my apprentice alone and so perhaps she should go with Toomas to one of the gathering places on the Raft where the females of the troupe like to take their only precious youngsters so that they can play and game with each other.

Roomis agrees and she sets off with Toomas to the front of the Raft and as they walk away I tell Novice Tofas to squat down close to me so that we are

comfortable together and then I ask him quietly if he has witnessed anything that might threaten the harmony of the troupe.

“Wise Tomas...” He replies as he looks into my face for something in my question that might be hidden.

“...now that he who was named Bantog - son of Sintog - has been Removed from the Raft there is surely none in the troupe that troubles us. Is there any bother that I have somehow not witnessed?”

I look into his familiar trusting face and I yearn to speak to him about all that I have recalled of my dream-pictures but I say instead.

“Novice Tofas. I determine that you are most gifted and I have seen you dutifully care for your fellows in the troupe just as I grow too tired to do much of those duties myself.” And I adjust my tail so that I am more comfortable.

“Have any of the youngsters...” I ask carefully.

“...questioned you about the words of the New-Ways and Troupe-Lore of Old that tell us of the ceremony of Removal which is commanded for those condemned of the Heresy of Greed?”

Novice Tofas does not quickly answer me because surely the chatter in his head is guiding him to be careful.

He places his hand on my leg as if to comfort me.

“Wise Tomas. I have been asked something...” He says slowly.

“...by one who I trust to be obedient and loyal and who would not have me speak of their question to any of our fellows. I was questioned that if I should be commanded to assume the duties of the Spirit-Guide in my turn will I advise the council of Apportion to act other than it does now?” I am pleased that Novice Tofas is so willing to tell me of the words that he has been trusted with and I give his hand a gentle squeeze as I say.

“That is a truly wise question Novice Tofas and I thank you for telling me of it. Will you now say how this question was answered by you?” And he grins at me before saying.

“I said that the wisdom of Wise Tomas is not to be bettered here on the Raft and so your guidance will always instruct those who will follow after you.”

“That was well spoken...” I say.

“...but I would hear what you chose not to say.” I see the grin leave his face as he nods his head.

“Wise Tomas. The words of the New-Ways and Troupe-Lore of Old...” He begins by saying.

“...tell us to regard the needs of the Spirit of the Raft and you have taught me to listen for Her guidance. I believe that She trusts only you with Her words for I have yet to hear them spoken to me...” I nod back at him patiently because the chatter in my head tells me that what he is trying to say is not spoken easily.

“...and in the many cycles of darkness and light since passed after the coming of the New-Ways do we not see that the Raft flourishes just as the troupe suffers the frustration and the pain of the difficult laws forced upon us all? I continue to nod.

“And surely...” He adds choosing his words carefully.

“...if the breaches have healed and the yellow bananas sprout again so bountifully...can we not be less...cruel...to those that fail in the disciplines that we all try so hard to keep?”

I determine that these are truly his own words that he is speaking and not those spoken to him by another and the chatter in my head tells me that behind these words he feels much anguish.

“Novice Tofas...” I reply.

“...you and those of the troupe that were birthed in the many cycles of light since passed after you stopped sucking milk from your mother’s breasts can only recall the discipline of the New-Ways. You are all too young to recall the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors that guided us before and none of you can speak of the challenge that the troupe undertook in disregarding the Old-Ways.” I stare hard at Novice Tofas with a scowl on my face and I add.

“We need the council of Apportion and we need the strict obedience of the troupe to its rulings. This Raft we call our precious home would not have endured without the laws of the New-Ways.” And I wince from a sudden twinge of pain from the base of my tail that brings a little water to my eyes.

“Tell that to Skyglo...” I say as if there is a taste of brown waste in my mouth.

“...for surely it was she that questioned the wisdom of the council of Apportion.”

Novice Tofas stares at me with a look of surprise on his face and he is quick to tell me that surely my wisdom is not failing me even though I did say that I grow tired of my duties.

I tell him that all is in the hands of the great and wise God Gonamana and that it is only when His faithful Consort should instruct Her powerful and obedient servant here on the Raft with a different guidance that the discipline demanded of the troupe will change.

Novice Tofas does not reply and from the look of tiredness in his eyes I am suddenly afraid that he has determined that I speak falsely about my obedience to the great and wise God Gonamana even though he has not heard from me about my loss of faith.

And so I grin at him to hide my anxiety but as the light from the Sun shines from the yellow colouring of his fur I once again recall my faithful mate Dolfis and I picture how she and my precious Tofas always had such a close fellowship together even until she passed from the troupe.

## 4. 4

I remain alone at my given place until the first Clouds form above the far horizon ahead of the Raft and a messenger arrives from the place of the Alpha to ask me if I will visit Lord Simolas who wants to speak with me.

The chatter in my head tells me that surely he wants Simolan to finish his instruction about the ceremony of Adulthood that he will celebrate when not so many more cycles of darkness and light have passed because the Alpha-to-be still needs more guidance that only the Spirit-Guide can give him about the duties expected of a fellow when he grows beyond being a youngster of the troupe.

I determine that I need not hurry and that Lord Simolas and his son can wait for me until after I have rid myself of my waste which I will surely have to do after the dark shadow of the Cloud-shade has passed from the Raft and I settle down to wait for the Sun to reach its mid point in the Sky.

The falling of the Cloud-rain does not bring me much joy since my precious Dolfis passed from the troupe and I again feel as lonely as I always do when I lick the water from my fur but when I am dried and the Sun once again warms me I walk to the back of the Raft where I feel cheered by the view out across the waters of the mighty Ocean and by the sight of the long tail of waste upon its surface that leads straight and true back towards the far horizon from where the Raft has journeyed.

Then I set off to find Lord Simolas and as I follow the pathways that lead to the given place of the Alpha I meet with Skyglo who is returning from a meeting there and we greet each other politely as I try to suppress from my head the recall of the disturbing dream-pictures that I had when the last cycle of darkness since passed was upon the Raft.

She grins at me and without any due formality she tells me that she has been chosen to bond with Simolan - son of Lord Simolas - who wants to take her as



his mate and that she is humbled as well as pleased by this news because it will be a great honour for her to perform the duties of the Consort of the next Alpha in his turn.

She does not seem to determine my distraction as I listen to what she tells me because she then boldly asks if it can be Novice Tofas rather than myself who teaches her of the duties and responsibilities of Adulthood and Bonding because she determines that one so important as me will be too busy with all of my many other undertakings.

I tell her that I am surprised that she has chosen to tell me of this news herself but if Lord Simolas has agreed to such a bonding then I will pray that she and Simolan will be joyful together and I also tell her that for one such as her who has not been so many cycles of darkness and light since passed here upon the Raft and for any female who would Bond with an Alpha-to-be it can only be for the Spirit-Guide to instruct her about her duties to come.

Her grin does not falter even with her disappointment and she gives me the sign of Offering before she walks away to leave me not only to question what she has told me but also to determine if she has just disrespected me again.

Then I walk on until I arrive at the place of the Alpha where I greet Lord Simolas who seems to have gained much confidence as he stands tall with his son Simolan standing on one side of him and his daughters Cobolan and Cobolas standing purposely on the other side of him.

The words of the New-Ways and Troupe-Lore of Old like the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors before them demand that the Alpha of the troupe will always be male and so with the coming of the New-Ways it has long since been decreed that the council of Apportion will not limit the number of birthings allowed to the Consort of the troupe's leader and Lord Simolas was pleased to welcome to the Raft his son Simolan in his turn after the birthing of his daughters who he named Cobolan and Cobolas.

I give the sign of Offering to them all before I tell Lord Simolas of my meeting with Skyglo and I question why he did not seek my guidance before allowing the intention of his son to Bond with a female so young and as yet so unproven.

His reply surprises me because he does not speak with the polite humility that I always expect of him.

“Wise Tomas. Your approval is only customary and I ask you not to make objections that defy my will.”

Simolan together with Cobolan and Cobolas all nod in agreement and the chatter in my head tells me that they have surely been counselling their father to control my influence over him and perhaps they have also been guiding him to test my authority.

I grin politely and I say.

“Lord Simolas. It is a serious duty to the troupe that the Alpha is Bonded with a female who displays the very best qualities and Simolan is surely wise enough not to choose a female who has not yet shown herself as truly noble even if her form gives him joy to look upon. Coban - daughter of Cobut - was already greatly respected when she was taken by you to be your faithful mate.”

Simolan stiffens and wants to speak while Cobalas and Cobolan shake their heads and scowl at me with their small black eyes staring out from under their lowered brows but Lord Simolan holds up one of his big hands to caution them all as he stares into my face.

“Wise Tomas. You speak freely but be cautioned. I was dutiful and took Coban to be my mate and it is you that I thank for choosing a Bonding with such a noble female even when the council of Elders would have chosen another. Your wisdom and your power was again respected and the troupe remains served. But you show me no sign that you have witnessed the talent that Simolan has found in Skyglo for she has proved to me and to all those that she does truly trust that not only is her form pleasing to look upon but she is also gifted beyond expectation.”

The chatter in my head tells me that I have been rebuked and that I am being tested because surely Skyglo does not possess any such gifts.

I am puzzled and so I say calmly.

“Lord Simolas. She truly has a gift for displaying herself to be no wiser than her fellows. I determine nothing else for which a greater respect is demanded.”

Simolan parts his thick lips as a grin spreads across his broad muzzle and he says.

“Yes Wise Tomas. From you she has hidden her gift well...” And I sense a purposeful disrespect in the way he speaks my title.

“...as she hid it from us all until she shared with me her trust...” He is clearly enjoying what he saying to me.

“...for when she was a youngster she did not determine that her gift was precious and that it was not shared by any others in the troupe and so she was not afraid. But since then she chose to hide this gift from us all in her belief that

she was truly a Heretic. So perhaps...” He continues with his grin growing wider.

“...you will treat her with more regard when I tell you that she was birthed with a gift so that she can witness the pictures and determine the chatter in the heads of her fellows.”

And he continues to grin at the puzzled look on my face as I try to determine why he is now so unafraid to withhold the respect that he should show me and also why I am only now being told of this strange new wisdom which if truly told is of the greatest importance.

I glance across at Lord Simolas who is also now grinning and I question if this remarkable claim can be a falsity because if Skyglo has truly been given a gift by which she can witness the pictures and determine the chatter in the heads of her fellows then my guidance should have been sought before now about a fellow who is surely a Heretic.

But then I quickly determine that if what I have just been told is truly spoken then for those that control this gift it would be something too precious to lose by having Skyglo punished and I feel my belly suddenly tighten as I start to fear that Skyglo has already witnessed the pictures and determined the chatter in my own head which she did then speak of to Simolan and to Lord Simolas proving that it is I who is truly a Heretic.

“She will be much honoured...” I say to Simolan as I try not to seem anxious and because I want to sound unafraid of her gift I add.

“...for she can then tell us who are they that choose to disrespect the words of the New-Ways and Troupe-Lore of Old even as they try to hide it.”

But it is Lord Simolas who replies and his grin quickly vanishes.

“She has told me that she is not so skilled that she can trust her talent to be without error despite that I have not yet witnessed her to be false in what she has revealed to me. I would truly take such as her to be my Consort without regret.” And he pats the shoulder of his son just as Cobolan then speaks up with a nod of encouragement from her younger sister.

“Skyglo did tell us that you would not oppose my brother’s intention to Bond with her and it seems that she spoke without error. Is that not so Wise Tomas?”

The chatter in my head tells me that there is more happening here than I can determine and that my fellows seem to be gaming with me.

“Lord Simolas...” I say while I grin politely.

“...this news is strange and yet indeed marvelous and if the troupe is thus

blessed with such a precious gift then I must go and offer my praise to the Spirits. It is then for me to seek out Skyglo who must surely need my help with such a burden.”

And I walk away from them with my tail raised up to display my dignity despite the hurt that it brings me and my belly tightens more as the feeling I have of fear grows stronger.

I follow the pathways back to the place of the Spirit-Guide while the chatter in my head tries to determine if Skyglo can truly have such a gift for it is a puzzle that Lord Simolas and the Alpha-to-be would speak to me of such an obvious Heresy unless they truly believed that Skyglo was able to make them powerful.

I arrive at my given place and with the chatter in my head being now more ordered it recalls my meetings with Skyglo in the cycles of light so soon passed and I tell myself that surely I must start to believe in what Simolan and Lord Simolas did say about her gift because when both Skyglo and I were at the chosen place of Novice Tofas after my last long walk around the edge of the Raft and I did speak to the gathering of youngsters it was Skyglo that questioned me about the ceremony of Removal just as I was distracted by the recall of my dream-picture that showed me forcing myself upon Monatus - daughter of Monaglo.

Skyglo surely questioned if it can bring joy to Silence a fellow because she was witnessing my recall of Monatus and she surely determined my lustful desires in the dream-picture even as I spoke about the important need for the ceremony of Removal.

And then Skyglo looked at me with alarm when we both attended the ceremony of Removal when he who was named Bantog was forced from the Raft in the name of the great and wise God Gonamana and the tight feeling in my belly increases as I determine that Skyglo surely witnessed my disrespect and my lack of faith in Him and in His obedient Spirit servants.

I tell myself that when the last cycle of darkness since passed was upon the Raft it was surely the Spirit of the Raft that woke me and gave me guidance with the disturbing dream-pictures of Skyglo commanding my Removal from the Raft and it must have been a warning to me about the danger that she and her powerful allies threaten me with.

Then the chatter in my head is only of how Skyglo might use her gift against me and I become very much more afraid until I am distracted by the arrival of

Gofat - son of Dolfat – who is the youngest brother of Dolfis and I gladly greet him and his precious son Goluc who have both come to ask my guidance about a suitable choice of a mate for Goluc who has long since celebrated his ceremony of Adulthood.

It brings me joy to speak with them both again and I praise Gofat for having such a tall and sturdy son who is blessed not only with a very broad jaw but also with a thick flowing mane that I reach out to stroke because its long shining fur is so like the colouring that Dolfis had and I ask them to be comfortable with me and we squat down together.

“Wise Tomas it is my desire to see Goluc Bonded well...” Says Gofat as he rests his hand onto the broad shoulder of his son.

“...and my fear is that I will soon join Dolfis - daughter of my father Dolfat - in passing from the troupe. I pray that the Spirits will allow me see a son birthed to Goluc before I too am chosen to be Silenced.”

“Gofat - son of Dolfat - I reply.

“...the matings of those Bonded can be few since the coming of the New-Ways and it is good that Goluc has waited...” And I grin at Goluc.

“...for it will surely add even more joy to the duty.” And as he returns my look I see in him the same kindly wisdom that I saw in Dolfis and since then in Novice Tofas too.

“Wise Tomas...” He says to me in his deep steady voice.

“...I pray that I shall receive respect and obedience given to me with joy just as you did from your faithful mate Dolfis. And I pray also for a son that I can be proud of just as you have Novice Tofas.”

“Thank you for your words Goluc - son of Gofat...” I reply gently.

“...now speak the name of the female that you would choose to Bond with and who you want to take as your mate for I determine that you have already made such a choosing.” But Gofat replies before his son can speak.

“It is Cobolan - daughter of Lord Simolas - for she is ready to Bond and she surely respects the seed that Goluc carries. That of Dolfat - father of Dolfis.”

Before I can tell them of my joy and of my doubts about such a Bonding we are suddenly all distracted by a noise that seems to come from beyond the far horizon ahead of the Raft.

The noise is gentle to begin with but it gets louder and louder as it quickly approaches us.

When the vast nameless sound reaches the Raft it completely fills all of

Creation around us and it makes the hairs of my fur begin to move with the force of its power.

Gofat and Goluc cling on to each other and they look around themselves with their frightened eyes staring open wide.

I can not move and I remain looking directly ahead of me because I am feeling more terror inside myself now than I have ever felt before despite my fear after the Silencing of Wise Loomis when I was threatened with Removal from the Raft.

The terrible loud noise fills our ears and it surrounds us with a deafening strangeness that can surely not have been witnessed before by any of the troupe upon the Raft even since the start of its very long journey.

I stare at my fellows as they cower down together on the surface of the Raft before me and I suddenly and truly determine that this is the end of Tomas - son of Tomag - he who is not so wise because he has denied his belief not only in the great and wise God Gonamana but also in His obedient Spirit servants so that now His mighty wrath is coming down as punishment upon all of the troupe.

With my head hurting from the power of this frightening and nameless clamour I close my eyes and I plead to the Spirit of the Raft to spare my fellows for it is only I that is truly the Heretic and I shake as I wait to be Silenced.

But as I cower and I whimper I determine that the fierce noise is slowly passing away from the Raft just as the dark shadow of the Cloud-shade does in its turn and in the darkness behind my closed eyes I picture the noise being a mighty growling that only one as powerful as the great and wise God Gonamana Himself could summon even as it slowly drifts away towards the far horizon behind the Raft.

Then the growling sound becomes gentle until it seems to reach us from very far away and it is only then that I hear the very many sounds of whimpering that are coming from my neighbours all around my given place and the whimpers quickly become howls and whoops as the troupe then together calls out in its shared terror.

At last I am brave enough to open my eyes with only the hope that I will see all things as they should be again but instead I see Gofat and Goluc huddled together before me as they stare back with frightened searching eyes.

As I return their gaze they both hurry to move so that they are no longer squatting.

They kneel before me instead.

And then in awe together they both lower their heads to touch their brows onto the surface of the Raft at my feet.

## 4. 5

After I have sent Gofat and Goluc away to seek out and to comfort Gofat's mate I remain where I am because the pathways that surround the place of the Spirit-Guide are very soon mobbed by a great many members of the troupe who have come to humble themselves to me and to beg for my mercy.

Novice Tofas also comes to find me and after he has struggled through the crowd of his fellows he quickly tells me of all the panic that he has witnessed elsewhere on the Raft and then when he looks around at how more and more of the troupe continue to arrive so that they can prostrate themselves to me he remains quiet and he starts to look at me as if I am a stranger to him.

"Novice Tofas..." I call out loudly and formally so that all around us can also hear me.

"...instruct those who have journeyed here to return to their duties and tell them not to be afraid for those that remain here serve not any purpose."

"Wise Tomas..." He replies quietly as he bows respectfully to me.

"...will you then guide me as to what did just happen with the frightful noise?"

I nod and I turn away as he then begins to walk around the margins of my given place to speak to those of our fellows who have been timidly watching our every move and he slowly and carefully ushers them back down the pathways that lead away from me while the chatter in my head desperately questions what I should do next.

I determine that surely a powerful force with an angry voice has visited the Raft which was not sent by Him or any of His Spirit servants to Silence me or to punish the troupe and I find myself praying to the Spirit of the Raft to thank Her for giving me protection from that which must truly have a power as mighty as Her own.

Then I determine that the troupe must surely believe that the frightful noise



which so terrified them all was summoned by me as I once again displayed my terrible powers even after so many cycles of darkness and light long since passed when no cause has angered the Spirit of the Raft or Her obedient servant.

As I watch the last of my puzzled and frightened fellows being sent away the chatter in my head then tells me that until I determine what the purpose was of the powerful force that brought the angry voice to us I will use the fear that has so disturbed the troupe to regain my authority with Lord Simolas and surely also to rid myself of the threat from Skyglo - daughter of Sunaglo.

I look around to see if Skyglo is near but as Novice Tofas is soon finished with his duty he returns to me and he distracts me by saying.

“Wise Tomas. I was before summoned to see Lord Simolas. But even as he started to speak there was a mighty growl all around us which gave us all much fear and even sent the respected Alpha-to-be Simotan to his knees....”

Novice Tofas is talking quickly for he is surely much troubled by what did happen and without pausing he then says.

“...and Lord Simolas instructed me to come here without delay and then to return to him with guidance from you about why the troupe and its precious home has witnessed such a display of power...” And he looks around him carefully before he adds.

“...Wise Tomas. I too was so afraid. Will you tell me what did happen?”

“Novice Tofas. I will tell you why Lord Simolas summoned you to his place...” I say calmly and I try to sound strong and fearless.

“...for he wishes to test your allegiance to me before he uses you to turn our fellows against me. Me! The Spirit-Guide of the troupe.”

My words are getting louder and Novice Tofas stares anxiously into my eyes with a look of both shock and puzzlement.

“Yes....” I continue as I nod my head slowly.

“...he has been influenced by a powerful Heresy which has turned his beliefs into falsities and which is endangering those close to him also.”

Then I grasp the shoulders of my only precious son and I look straight into his face as I ask him.

“Novice Tofas. You must tell me now. Where does your loyalty lie?”

There is a pause while Novice Tofas seems to order the chatter in his head but he does not falter when he says.

“With you Wise Tomas. It has always been with you. Did you truly need to ask me that?”

And the joy that I feel at hearing him say this brings water to my eyes so that the sight of his form before me becomes blurred and the chatter in my head tells me that perhaps I have still not yet clearly seen all of the given talents of my apprentice.

With great seriousness I say.

“Novice Tofas. We will then surely agree that the Spirit of the Raft has seen the danger that will come from the Bonding of Simotan - son of Lord Simolas - to the Heretic Skyglo - daughter of Sunaglo...” And a feeling of worthiness grows in me so that I can stare hard at the growing look of confusion on the face of Novice Tofas and I determine that he will surely not now doubt my words.

“...and you must now go to Lord Simolas and tell him that the Spirit of the Raft has witnessed such a vile Heresy that She instructed Her obedient servant to display a dire warning to the troupe so that we are awakened to the deceptions of Skyglo whose malign influence over the troupe must be stopped.”

“Skyglo...a Heretic...?” Asks Novice Tofas who can not hide his shock.

“...what has she done? She has always been a favourite of mine.” He adds with disbelief as he steps back from me.

The chatter in my head tells me that he has not yet been told of the news that Skyglo is said to be blessed with an extraordinary gift.

“It is she that speaks falsities about the rule and the guidance of this troupe...” I reply.

“...and it is she who tries to turn its Alpha against its Spirit-Guide.” And I reach out to him again so that I can hug him to me and I say.

“Our purpose is for the good of the troupe. We must act together and we must be clever.”

And as if he is suddenly very tired I feel him slump against me and with much sadness in his voice he quietly says.

“As it has always been.”

## 4. 6

Novis Tofas is without joy when he leaves me but he obediently hurries away to spread the news amongst the troupe that it is Skyglo that has angered the Spirits and it was thanks to their loyal Spirit-Guide that a warning was sounded out to alert the troupe to the threat of her Heresy.

Then I summon a messenger to go to Lord Simolas and to ask him to gather with the council of Elders here at my given place because I am suddenly too tired after performing my duties to journey elsewhere on the Raft.

I still have a feeling of worthiness as I squat down to wait patiently for the wise and revered ones of the troupe to arrive and the Sun does not travel very far in its journey down towards the far horizon before I see that Lord Simolas has indeed received my message and I hide my satisfied grin when I see him and every member of the council of Elders following on behind him as they all walk towards me along one of the pathways leading to my given place.

The chatter in my head tells me that they come to me out of fear rather than out of politeness because they have surely already spoken with Novice Tofas and heard the natter of the troupe which tells them that I have used my terrible powers again which is surely why I am too tired to leave my given place.

Lord Simolas has lost most of his earlier boldness and Bawtak like most of the other members of the council of Elders displays a humility which tells me that he is in dread of me and that he is surely prepared to accept any guidance that I choose to give.

Gordan is also very respectful and I determine that if he did question how I gained the respect of the troupe after Brandip was Silenced at the back of the Raft then he does not doubt now that I have been favoured by the Spirits.

I greet them all politely and I assure them that I have only been an obedient servant of both the Spirit of the Raft and the troupe because She was so much angered that She commanded me to join with the Spirit of the Sky in sounding

out a wrathful warning to the troupe about the one who has kept her dangerous Heresies hidden for so long.

Lord Simolas blinks nervously and he tells me that the troupe now natters only of Skyglo - daughter of Sunaglo - who is a Heretic that threatens the sacred journey and he pleads that I will pray for his only precious son to be spared because Simotan was surely influenced by the dangerous charms of Skyglo and he pleads that the duty of the Alpha-to-be is not threatened even after his intention to bond with her.

I speak reassuring words to him before I then turn to the council of Elders and to their chief who I advise to be without delay in proposing to both Lord Simolas and myself what judgment is best passed on Skyglo so that the Raft and the troupe is saved from the wrath of the great and wise God Gonamama.

Gordan nods his agreement and so I quickly end the gathering because my purpose has been achieved and while they are all leaving I grin to myself as I watch them walk away and I rub at the base of my tail before I settle down to make myself comfortable and to await for the coming of the cycle of darkness.

But even as the Sun journeys on to the far horizon I can not determine what was the true purpose of the powerful force that brought its angry voice to menace the Raft and when I prepare myself for sleep I find that the gloom that comes to surround me brings with it a feeling of great anxiety.

## 4.7

What awakens me in a very black darkness is the sound of another loud growling noise that fills all of Creation around the Raft.

The chatter quickly returns to my head and my fear chases away any dream-pictures before I can recall them.

I determine that the powerful force has again brought its angry voice to scare the troupe and I question if it is only I that will be awakened by such a loud noise but I can not see if any of my fellows have been freed from the sleep that always overwhelms them after the cycle of light has ended because I can not see through the darkness.

I close my eyes and I cower down as the fierce growling noise seems to move away to the far horizon behind the Raft and when at last I open my eyes I see again only a very black darkness that is hiding from me the beds of yellow bananas around my given place.

There is no pale blue light shining from any of them.

I determine that something is terribly wrong and with only a quiet growling sound now coming to my ears from very far away I look up to see how far the Moon has journeyed across the darkened Sky.

But the Moon has gone.

In all of the darkened Sky where I search for its pale blue disc the Moon is nowhere to be seen.

A cold shiver of fear runs down the length of my back to meet the ache at the base of my tail and the chatter in my head tells me that I must still be sleeping so that I am witnessing a dream-picture because surely the order of Creation does not change like this.

I feel puzzled and helpless as well as scared and very alone and because I can not determine if the powerful force has truly taken the Moon from the darkened Sky I close my eyes and I pray to the Spirit of the Raft to ask for Her comfort

and protection and I also pray that the chatter in my head will be stopped by sleep.

There is nothing but darkness overwhelming me until I seem to awaken again as the noise of yet another loud growling sounds out all around the Raft.

Then I hear a loud pitiful howl coming from my nearest neighbour who is surely also awake and as the noise from the powerful force continues to fill my ears the howling from nearby is joined by more and then more howling as a great call of desperation seems to spread across the entire Raft until I determine that every member of the troupe is surely adding to this urgent cry of alarm.

The chatter in my head tells me that I have again slept and now the cycle of darkness has passed from the Raft but all around me there is still a gloom which is not how the cycle of light should begin.

In confusion I press my hands to my ears so as to block out the dreadful noises coming from all around me and I look about to witness the Sky that is completely covered over by dark shifting Clouds except for a gap above the far horizon ahead of the Raft where a small amount of blue is showing through.

My confusion grows as I try to determine why the dark shadow of the Cloud-shade has come upon the Raft when the troupe is only just waking up and as I stare at the gap between the Clouds above the far horizon I suddenly glimpse the bright yellow disc of the Sun but it is quickly hidden again as the large dark Clouds restlessly merge to hide it.

I stand up in the midst of the distress and the joylessness that is all about me and I suddenly feel an overwhelming sense of worthiness as I determine that I was right to deny my faith in the great and wise God Gonamana and His obedient Spirit servants because we were told that their purpose was to order and protect the troupe but now it seems with the coming of the powerful force they have been helpless in stopping this disorder of Creation.

Then something seems to change in my head and even as I press my hands harder to my ears I start to laugh.

It is not a laugh that comes from my feeling of worthiness or truly from any feeling of joy for it is surely a laugh from one who finds an overwhelmingly important truth but loses themselves because of it.

My laughter is gentle at first and it is not more than the sort of amusing chuckle like that I would share with Dolfis as we watched our precious Tofas fall down onto his tail while he was trying to take his first infant steps.

But my laughter becomes louder and less controllable just as when I myself

was still a youngster and I would secretly natter with my young male fellows about Lendan - son of Lendos - and how he fell from the Raft when he was ridding himself of his brown waste or when we giggled helplessly about the obvious difference between the body of an adult male and the body of an adult female as we watched them mating.

Then it becomes more serious when my sides start to ache from the strain of laughing so loudly and in my growing hysteria I recall the passing of my father and the water coming from the eyes of my mother as she watched his body leave the Raft and also too my mother lying Silent at the place of rituals in her turn.

And the ache becomes pain as I then laugh more loudly still at the recall of how my faithful Dolfis danced so gracefully under the gaze of the Spirit of the Sky only to stumble and then to fall down from where she was not to get up again.

“What falsities we have been taught...” I manage to say even with my muzzle now stretched into a wide grin.

“...for we are surely not His chosen ones...” I add as water flows from my eyes.

“...because we are only fools that seek purpose in the vast Creation that is too big for us to determine and that cares for us not.” And my laughter becomes no different from when I sob and weep.

“Was there anything before my birthing...?” I plead to the Clouds above me.

“...and will there be anything after my Silencing?”

And I laugh and I sob as the chatter in my head questions not only my belief in the flesh and the chatter that is mine but also in any belief that a monkey can be truly wise when he has only the disciplines of the troupe and a seemingly ordered and reliable Creation around him to give him his truths and his wits.

“Only when the light from the Sun and the light from the Moon is hidden from me do I clearly see that Creation is without guidance...” I shout out to whoever may be listening and I spread my arms wide as I then reach up as if to embrace every dark Cloud that is above me.

“...nothing will stay the same as it was before because change is the master of all and surely nothing now will endure.”

And then I look around me and across the beds of yellow bananas where I see that my neighbours have stopped their howling to quietly stare at me with fearful looks on their faces and I determine that they surely believe that I have

been summoning the powerful force that is menacing the Raft.

“Believe that I control the Sky...” I call out to them as the nameless growling noise fades away to the far horizon behind the Raft and then because I find it amusing I add.

“...I have already tamed the Sun and the Moon and so it is the waters of the mighty Ocean that will next obey me.”

And my neighbours look back at me seemingly unable to determine what is happening around them or what I am saying but they must surely be yearning for their Spirit-Guide to find appeasement so that he will stop taking from them the simple harmony of the sacred journey.

I close my eyes and as I wait for a calm order to slowly return to the chatter in my head I can not help but recall the danger that Skyglo still threatens me with and I determine that this change to the order of Creation can surely help me to act quickly against her.

Despite being without any comfort from the Sun when I set off along the pathways that lead to the place of the Deed-master I try hard to give polite greetings to those many of my fellows that plead for my guidance as I hurry past them on my way and the Sun is still hidden behind the dark shifting Clouds when I find Brandas - son of Brandak - who is soothing the distress of his loyal mate.

I give them both the sign of Offering and I reassure them that things will be again as they were before if only we do not delay in finding Skyglo who must then be escorted to the given place of Separation where she will be guarded so that she can not speak with any member of the troupe.

But Brandas does not move and he tells me that what I have told him to do has already been done because he received a command from Lord Simolas before the end of the last cycle of light since passed.

And then as I look at him in surprise he asks me in a whisper if the frightful noise that brought the dark shadow of the Cloud-shade to Creation not in its turn did come because there truly are malign phantoms that protect Skyglo which have been angered by her exile.

I tell him that there are no such phantoms which threaten the troupe and that we will all see that order does return to the sacred journey after Skyglo is Removed from the Raft and I thank him formally for doing his duty so obediently.

That Skyglo has already been Separated puzzles me and so with the huge



mass of drifting Clouds getting increasingly darker all across the Sky I set off for the place of the Alpha where I want to question Lord Simolas and I again have to refuse the attentions of the many of my fellows who seek my guidance as I pass them by along the way.

On arriving at the place of the Alpha I find that the members of the council of Elders are already gathered there and they do not hesitate to question me about the dark shadow of the Cloud-shade that is now upon the Raft when the Sun has surely not reached the mid point in its journey across the Sky and I answer them with the promise that only when the Raft is rid of she who has truly offended the Spirits will order and harmony return.

Lord Simolas looks to be in pain when he asks.

“Wise Tomas. How could I have been so foolish as to let Skyglo - daughter of Sunaglo - blind me to the Heresy of her gift? And to allow her the intention of being the consort of the next Alpha in his turn.”

And to the members of the council of Elders he then says.

“Revered ones. Are we not truly fortunate to be blessed with the gifts of Wise Tomas who has the guidance of the Spirits and the power to warn us of our errors?”

They all nod and they offer me their kind words which I humbly accept before I say.

“Wise and revered fellows. She was clever and hid well her deceptions and her desire to do harm. The Spirits have faith that the troupe will use me well in defeating the Heresy to be found upon the Raft and I must praise you all for your haste in Separating her. Novice Tofas...” I add as my chosen apprentice joins the gathering.

“...do you have news that you bring to us?” And before he answers he gives us all his greeting and the sign of Offering.

“Wise and revered ones. I have come from the given place of Separation where the Heretic is guarded in her exile and she was much afraid. I did not speak with her but she pleaded her innocence to me with many words and she begged me to speak to you all on her behalf.”

“Novice Tofas...” I say angrily.

“...do not be fooled by her falsities for this gathering here will now pass a judgment upon her.” And I glare at him because I am suddenly afraid that he is questioning his loyalty to me.

“No...” He replies.

“...the wise and revered ones will judge as they should and the troupe will give its thanks.”

And as he says this the waters of the Cloud-rain begin to fall.

In surprise we all look up and we can only question where the Sun has travelled to in its journey across the Sky behind the Clouds because we can all surely determine that it is still far from being directly above the Raft.

All too soon the waters of the Cloud-rain are falling so hard and so fast that my face hurts as I look up and so I turn to my fellows to see them all either gazing back at me or at each other and I can also see that each of them is just as helpless and as confused as me.

“Lord Simolas...” I shout out.

“...we have not yet spoken a judgment.”

But the Cloud-rain is beating down so furiously onto our heads and onto our shoulders and it is splashing down upon the surface of the Raft with such a noise that my voice is not heard and Lord Simolas signs that we should all settle down to wait for the Cloud-rain to stop falling.

And so we all squat down in the chill and the gloom and we endure the vast amount of water that is falling down upon us from above for we can do nothing else but to keep still and to watch the great torrents of it as they wash around our feet.

We wait patiently but the falling of the Cloud-rain does not soon stop and so I determine that as none of us has a purpose in remaining gathered together I sign to Lord Simolas that I am leaving and despite that all around the place of the Alpha is hidden by the falling of the Cloud-rain and despite that my fur is heavy with water I stand up and I walk away along the pathways that will lead me back to my given place.

I plead for guidance from the Spirit of the Raft as I stumble along through the deluge of water but my questions about Skyglo and her gift and my questions about the change to the order of Creation are not answered even as I witness a long shining finger of bright light that suddenly points down from above me and which seems to touch the surface of the Raft some distance to the side of the pathway.

The light flashes so suddenly and so briefly and it shines so very brightly that it shocks me into a still silent terror and I stand shivering with fear between the beds of yellow bananas as I determine that perhaps I should return to the company and safety of my fellows at the given place of the Alpha.

But before I can move I am shocked again by a very loud bark that suddenly sounds out from directly above my head and the noise of it hurts my ears.

Then the loud and fierce growling sound of the powerful force again surrounds the Raft and I close my eyes to pray that the waters of the Cloud-rain are hiding me because I am very afraid of being found and chosen for Silencing.

And so I desperately plead for my own flesh and chatter to be spared even as the fierce growling sound starts to quieten around me but my wordless appeal is stopped by yet another change happening to the order of Creation.

I open my eyes and I determine that the journey of the Raft is truly coming to an end because the Cloud-rain is now no longer beating down onto me from above because something which I can not see in front of me is pushing its falling waters into my face.

Something without any form is also pressing against my body and I try to lean forward against it to stop myself from being pushed over but I can not determine the mystery of it and so I hurry to squat down because that seems to be the only way to cope with this strange and frightening new change.

Much fear tightens my belly as the chatter in my head tells me that the powerful force must now be close to achieving its terrible purpose of disordering all of Creation so that nothing can endure and the Raft and its journey will be lost.

As I squat with the waters of the Cloud-rain beating against my back I start to recall how in all the very many cycles of light since passed after the coming of the New-Ways the troupe has suffered so much pain and so much frustration with its obedient duty to the words of the New-Ways and Troupe-Lore of Old that has allowed us to endure and I feel so very sad that all will now be wasted as the Raft and the troupe upon it perishes.

I wait and I listen as the fierce growling sound slowly becomes nothing more than a moan beyond the far horizon but the misery of the chill and the gloom and the Cloud-rain fills me with despair and I can do nothing but give thanks to the Spirit of the Raft that my precious Dolfis does not have to suffer this final anguish with me.

And then despite so much Cloud-rain beating against me and despite the vast amount of water flooding the Raft all around where I squat between the beds of yellow bananas I determine that there is also water coming from my eyes because I am now so completely overwhelmed by loneliness and defeat that my shoulders start to shake and I find myself weeping and sobbing.

## 4. 8

It is only very much later when I am still squatting alone with my fur heavy with water that I determine there is less Cloud-rain pushing against me and that perhaps the Raft will endure after all.

For comfort I have been recalling the stories that are told by the words of the New-Ways and Troupe-Lore of Old about the Raft at the start of its journey and I try to picture the mortal creatures of the ancient forest when the numberless cycles of darkness and light come to be and with then the coming of the waters of the Cloud-rain that fell down upon the Homeland of Dry-Creation both in the darkness and in the light until there was a mighty Ocean without limits.

The chatter in my head tells me that the mortal creatures of the ancient forest must have felt just as I now do and I try to determine if there truly was a great and wise God Gonamana who became so disappointed and angered with their disrespect and their lack of discipline and I question if the powerful force that is now disordering Creation is truly His punishment of the troupe because of my continuing Heresy.

But soon I see that there is very much less Cloud-rain pushing against me and despite the gloom of the dark shadow of the Cloud-shade I can also see more and more of the pathway ahead of me and when at last the Cloud-rain stops I am surprised to determine that whatever it was that pushed it against me is still pressing against my body because I am unsteady when I stand up.

I look around because the Raft beyond the beds of yellow bananas is no longer hidden from me and as the gloom continues to lighten I see that on the stepping places within the beds of yellow bananas and on the places and the pathways between the beds of yellow bananas there are many of my fellows that remain squatting down and all of them look anxious and very sad.

I shiver as the flood of water around my feet washes away and I scowl because my wet fur is still being pressed against my body by something that I

can not see but which feels like the wind from a mouth when it is speaking and I determine that this strange wind touching me is cold and the words that it is saying are silent and without end.

Around me my fellows are surely praying to be delivered from the same frightening disorders that have changed the Creation that was before so safe and they all seem afraid to groom the water from their fur perhaps because of the long silent wind that I see is pushing against them also.

I call out that none in the troupe should be afraid because their Spirit-Guide will rid the troupe of the Heresy that is bringing this punishment to the Raft but those that hear me look no less anxious when they see how the long silent wind not only pushes against me so that I sway unsteadily but also how it seemingly pushes against the mass of dark Clouds above so that they journey quickly across the Sky that is still covered over by them.

Then I settle back down to groom myself and it is before I am finished that I see there are no more Clouds appearing from above the far horizon ahead of the Raft so that the Sky there is becoming clear and blue as it should be even as the Clouds above me continue to move onwards to the far horizon from where we have journeyed.

As I end my task of grooming I determine that the force of the long silent wind has become less strong because where I am already dry the hairs of my fur move about in gentle waves which cheers me to see and I question how the powerful force can bring to us something so soft and quiet after menacing us with the barking and growling sounds that were so brutal and loud.

The chatter in my head questions what I should do now if the Raft is truly not to perish and I am also recalling the dream-picture of Skyglo when I am distracted by the passing of the dark shadow of the Cloud-shade from the Raft and the feeling of warmth that the light from the Sun brings with it fills me with a hope that my Heresy will remain unpunished.

I look up at the Sky and I see that the Sun has travelled a little beyond the midpoint in its journey to the far horizon and is now where it should be when its yellow disc reappears after the Cloud-rain has fallen and when I determine that the long silent wind is also passing away from the Raft the chatter in my head tells me that surely Creation is changing back to its right order.

I stand up to stretch the stiffness from my limbs and I rub at the base of my tail before I take my ration of yellow bananas from the nearest bed beside the pathway and as I feed I quietly try to determine what action I should take next

because the chatter in my head is telling me that the Raft must be rid of Skyglo before I can truly be at ease again.

With my share of yellow bananas in my belly and with the Sun warming my fur I feel comforted and ordered enough again to seek out Lord Simolas and the council of Elders who will surely still be at the place of the Alpha where I will demand that a judgment be made about the Removal of Skyglo.

I do not walk far before I greet Jilan - daughter of Gordan - who seems to be gladdened by meeting with me but also very anxious about something that concerns her greatly and after she gives me the sign of Offering she hurries to ask for my guidance.

“Jilan - daughter of Gordan - you honour me by asking...” I tell her and I nod my head out of the respect that she is due after Bonding with Marotan - the youngest son of Lord Simotan and the brother of Lord Simolas.

“...and be not afraid about the changes in the order of Creation so soon since passed for did we not also survive together the discovery of the first breach in the surface of the Raft before the coming of the New-Ways?”

“Wise Tomas. I can recall nothing of the sacred journey before my legs were swallowed by the mouth that opened up beneath me...” She replies.

“...for I was an infant then and now many cycles of darkness and light have since passed and I have birthed Marolan who is now grown enough to mentor Toomas - daughter of Novice Tofas.”

I grin politely and I say.

“Jilan. The troupe is much blessed with Marolan and Toomas.”

“But Wise Tomas...” She then says with some urgency.

“...I have heard news that when the dark shadow of the Cloud-shade was upon the Raft not in its turn and while the Cloud-rain fell when it should not there was a long shining finger of bright light that reached down from the Sky...”

She is speaking too quickly for me to tell her that I too saw the sudden flash of light that seemed to touch our only precious home.

“...and it found Tyfis - son of Tybol - the father of the troupe’s twins.” Jilan adds and then as I wait for her to find the right words to say more I recall that not so many cycles of darkness and light have since passed after two new young ones were birthed together by Weelap - daughter of Meelap - the chosen mate of Tyfis - son of Tybol - that both grew together in her belly as infant males.

Because the youngsters look so alike and despite that one was birthed smaller

than the other the wise and revered ones of the troupe decreed that they be called twins and because the birthing of twins is almost never witnessed by any generation of the troupe it was decreed by the council of Apportion that it was not an act of Heresy that a second youngster was birthed when only one was to be allowed and so no punishment was demanded for Tyfis and Weelap.

“And Tyfis...” Jilan says at last as she grasps her hands together.

“...was giving comfort to the twins and to his faithful mate when the long finger of bright light reached down and touched him...” Jilan now has water covering her eyes.

“...and they are all now Silent as they still lie where they fell because all in the troupe fear to go near them.”

And Jilan finishes what she is saying with a prayer to the great and wise God Gonamana.

I try to comfort her but she gently takes my arm so that she can pull herself closer to me.

“They have sent for Novice Tofas...” She whispers.

“...to ask him if it was you that wielded your terrible powers.”

Despite being just as shocked and puzzled as is Jilan at hearing this sad news I tell her that it surely is the will of the great and wise God Gonamana Himself that both Tyfis and Weelap together with the twins have passed from the troupe but she continues to hold onto my arm and the water from her eyes starts to wet the fur on her face.

“What is it Jilan? Hide nothing from me.” I then say as she looks down at her feet.

“Wise Tomas...” She begins slowly.

“...I was so afraid that you had Silenced Tyfis and punished also his mate because they gave to the troupe an extra belly to feed with the precious yellow bananas that the Spirit of the Raft so jealously nurtures.”

“The council of Apportion made a ruling that it was allowed...” I reply.

“...and the story told by the ancestors about the birthing of twins being a Heresy is no longer spoken. Do not heed those still upon the Raft who would believe the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors that spoke of the coming of male twins that would bring ill fortune and deception together with false Omens to challenge the safety of the sacred journey.”

Jilan still looks down to the surface of the Raft and I sense that she has not yet spoken all that she wants to say.

“Jilan - daughter of Gordan. Why were you afraid that it was me that punished Tyfis?” I ask and I use my hand to raise up her chin so that she is looking at me again.

“Wise Tomas. When the mighty growling noise was first heard in the last cycle of light since passed I was so afraid. And Marotan too was very afraid. We believed it was the end for us and in our comfort for each together we mated when we should not have and his seed is inside me...” Water flows from her eyes as she starts to sob.

“...and I am afraid that if a new young one should grow in my belly then the council of Apportion will rule that we be punished.”

“Jilan...” I say wiping the wet fur on her cheek with my hand.

“...worry not now. For new young ones do not easily come to most in the troupe. Dolfis gave me but one and we mated often. You must wait for the sickness that replaces the cycles of seed-blood before any can determine if you will be judged...” And I grin as a display of my comfort to her before I add.

“...I will always speak well in your favour and I will pray that the difficult choice will not need to be made.”

Jilan looks down at her feet again as she surely determines that if she births another new young one when the council of Apportion has not made a ruling to allow her to do so then a choice will be forced upon Marotan about which one of them is punished with a ceremony of Removal.

Other than choosing to rid the Raft of himself Marotan can select the new young one for Removal or Jilan or even his precious son Marolan and his choice must then be approved by the council of Elders.

“Will you pray that I do not bring this shame upon Marotan and also Lord Simolas...” Jilan says quietly.

“...and upon my father who leads the council of Elders with such respect and upon you Wise Tomas our most gifted Spirit-Guide.”

I tell her that I will pray often for her and that she and Marotan must not speak to any in the troupe about their mating and after she thanks me for my kind words she hurries back along the pathway speaking words of prayer to the great and wise God Gonamana.

As I watch her leave me I am distracted by the light from the Sun as it sparkles from the surface water of a large Pool of Hurt in a nearby bed of yellow bananas and I slowly shake my head as I question if the harsh discipline of the New-Ways that gives my fellows such anguish and suffering is truly to be



wasted because of the powerful force that has already threatened to end the endurance of Creation.

But because of the importance of my journey I soon hurry on towards the place of the Alpha and I feel the comfort not only of the sight of the clear blue Sky above me and the feel of a warm dry Raft beneath my feet but also of the noiseless Creation all around that does not send a long silent wind to make me unsteady.

When I arrive at the place of the Alpha I determine that Lord Simolas is also much comforted by how the right order of Creation has returned because he is looking very joyful as he natters with the many members of the council of Elders that are gathered there with him.

He greets me kindly and without delay he praises both my guidance and my bold actions saying that we all have lost a great burden now that she who did truly offend the Spirits and who did hide her Heresy so well has been Silenced and that with her passing from the troupe the disorder of Creation has stopped so that everything is again as it should be.

I am surprised and puzzled to hear what he says and I want to question how it is that I have not attended a ceremony of Removal to rid Skyglo from the Raft but he just grins at me and nods his head as if truly admiring my wisdom as he then tells me that he was suprised and yet very gladdened when the respected Spirit-Guide of the troupe determined that it was not Skyglo who was a threat to the troupe but Weelap - daughter of Meelap - she who birthed the twin sons Tylap and Weefis.

Then he tells me that the wise and revered ones of the troupe have all agreed that with the Silencing of Weelap by the long shining finger of bright light the great and wise God Gonamana and His faithful Consort the Spirit of the Raft together with His obedient Spirit servants that order our lives have all been appeased and that harmony again orders Creation.

I can only stare at him and try to determine the purpose of his words as he then tells me that the Heretic Weelap did surely spread deception both to her mate that gave her his seed and to troupe which welcomed her two new young ones and truly all but me were blinded to the malice that the twins were destined to harm us with.

Then he grins and tells me that the troupe is surely blessed by my gift for had we judged that Skyglo be Removed from the Raft it would have been only the start of the ill fortune that the twins were going to bring to us all.

When he sees that I am distracted by what he has told me he gently pats my shoulder and he asks that I be comfortable with him for surely I must need to rest after performing such a duty using my terrible powers so that a mighty force of punishment was visited upon the Heretic and he who comforted her.

As I listen and I determine what is being said the chatter in my head tells me that now it would not serve me well to tell Lord Simolas that he speaks in error because it would question his faith in my wisdom and in my powers and so I tell him that I only do my duty for the good of the troupe and that I still have strength enough to go myself to the place of Separation where I will speak with Skyglo and end her exile.

Before I set off we all agree that a ceremony for the Silenced must be held so that we can rid the Raft of the bodies of Tyfis and Weelap together with Tylap and Weefis before the passing of this cycle of light and that by showing respect to our Silent fellows it will bring us merit with the Spirits.

Because I feel frustrated and angry I walk slowly along the pathways that lead to the place at the edge of the Raft where the exiled are kept guarded and as I journey I try to determine how I am going to protect myself against Skyglo now that she is no longer to be Separated and I pray that none of my fellows have already spoken to her of her release.

I meet Simolan along the way who fills with joy when he hears that the command to punish Skyglo was spoken in error and I tell him that I am going now to speak with her and to give her my guidance before she and I attend the place of rituals where we will meet with him when the Sun has journeyed further to the far horizon.

On arriving at the place of Separation I thank and then dismiss the sentries who have bravely done their duty despite their fears and when they have gone I approach where a frightened and dejected Skyglo is squatting down alone but surely curious to determine what is now happening.

“Skyglo - daughter of Sunaglo...” I say formally and at hearing her name spoken she jumps up excitedly.

“...tell me what it is that I have come to say to you.” I then add as I take hold of her arm in my strong fist and I stare menacingly down into her young face as a challenge for her to witness the pictures and determine the chatter in my head.

“Please Wise Tomas. Be not angry with me I beg you...” She pleads in a quiet frightened voice and I suddenly recall how small and fragile she truly is and how easy it would be for me to force myself upon her as she tries to cower

down at my feet but I hold her firmly as she continues to whimper.

“...if you have been told of my talent and you seek to test me then I must tell you that your gift is too powerful for my sight and you are closed to me.”

I very much want to believe what she says but I determine that I must test her and so as I stare down into her eyes I picture in my head that I am roughly throwing her from the side of the Raft and rather than flinch she says to me.

“And I would not disrespect you by trying to witness the wisdom that is yours and which you choose not to speak of...” And with only a very small movement of her body she turns so that the shape of her rump and the curve of her breasts are more favourably displayed to me.

“...please Wise Tomas have I offended you?” She then adds as she looks up at me with her round black eyes blinking closed and then open.

I become very angry when I see that she is trying to test my lustful desires for her and so I roughly pull her towards me and I show her my teeth as I slowly and carefully say.

“Be very afraid of me Skyglo - daughter of Sunaglo - for you are not closed to me and if you seek to harm me or any of our fellows in the troupe I will not seek a judgement from the council of Elders or even Lord Simolas...” And I lean forward so that I can see the wind from my words move the fur on her face.

“...I will deal with you myself.”

And I can see that she has truly listened to me for she is not able to hide the fear in her eyes as drops of water start to spill from them.

## 4. 9

Skyglo says little as we walk together towards the place of rituals and on the way I tell her of the Silencing of the twins and how it was Weelap - daughter of Meelap - who deceived the troupe until I discovered the Heresy that she was hiding and so Silenced her with a mighty force using my terrible powers.

I also tell Skyglo that without my ruling to the wise and revered ones of the troupe truly a judgment would have been made to Remove her from the Raft after it was determined that her claim to witness the pictures and determine the chatter in the heads of her fellows was the gift of a Heretic whose purpose was falsity and deception.

She surely listens carefully to what I tell her and despite that she seems puzzled by my news she thanks me formally for having saved her from being judged in error and when we arrive at the back of the Raft she takes a place next to Simolan who can not stop grinning as he puts his arm around her shoulder.

With great dignity I stride across to my place next to the bodies of the Silenced where I kneel opposite to Lord Simolas who is already kneeling quietly with his head raised high so that his groomed mane is displayed proudly.

And then as we all wait for the last of our fellows to arrive I try to determine if Skyglo has spoken falsely by telling me that I am closed to her and I question if she is truly clever enough and also brave enough to game with me over how I have hidden my Heresy from the rest of the troupe.

The Sun does not journey very much further before all members of the troupe are gathered and the ceremony for the Silenced begins with Lord Simolas telling the troupe about the disorder that was sent to the Raft and why it was necessary that a terrible power was wielded by their obedient Spirit-Guide so that the chatter was Silenced and the flesh was made cold for these of their fellows lying before them.

The chatter in my head tells me that surely all of the troupe will be staring at

me in wonder but I choose to ignore them just as I determine not to display any weakness by looking across at Skyglo and then when I speak to the troupe on behalf of the Spirits and I say that nothing must stop the punishment of those who would try to deceive the troupe with their falsities I again do not seek out Skyglo's gaze.

But after the bodies of the Silenced have been carefully lowered and then dropped from the back of the Raft for the benefit of the cold and hungry sharks and just before I am then called upon to lead the ancient chant of gratitude to end the ceremony I do glance across at Skyglo and I see that she has her face pressed against the chest of Simolan who is comforting her with his arm still around her shoulder.

With the ceremony ended Lord Simolas stands before the troupe to command that there is to be a ceremony of Adulthood for his son Simolan which will be celebrated after the passing of only a few more cycles of darkness and light and he also then decrees that Skyglo - daughter of Sunaglo - has not lost the intention to be Bonded with the next Alpha-to-be despite being wronged by us all even as she proved herself dutiful and brave.

The troupe natter excitedly as they leave the place of rituals for they now believe that the Raft has been rid of the deception and the ill fortune that brought about the change to the order of Creation and when I determine that many of my fellows want to humble themselves to me in gratitude for my terrible powers I wait patiently at the back of the Raft for the pathways to clear before I too return to my place to wait for the coming of the cycle of darkness.

## 4. 10

It is a sudden and brief very noisy bark that awakens me from sleeping and its power has shaken me so much that my fur has risen up all over my body.

Before the chatter returns to my head I have already jumped to my feet and I find myself searching about me with my lips drawn back as I pant heavily.

Then the loud growling noise is again calling out across the waters of the mighty Ocean from every part of the far horizon around me and I determine that the cycle of light is upon the Raft because my fellows have also been awakened by the overwhelmingly noisy sounds.

A great howling has already begun across the surface of the Raft and despite the gloom from the dark shadow of the Cloud-shade that is upon all of Creation I can see many of my neighbours gazing desperately around themselves in confusion as others cry out their fear to the mass of dark Clouds that are covering the Sky.

Slowly the loud growling from across the waters of the mighty Ocean becomes less noisy just as the howling from my fellows does too but then as I close my eyes and I quietly pray to the Spirit of the Raft for Her guidance I feel another long silent wind starting to push against me.

I open my eyes to see that many of my neighbours are now staring at me surely in the hope that I can give them reassurance and comfort about what is happening but I can only scowl as I begin to question why the powerful force that threatens to end the endurance of Creation chooses not to bring with it a change of order great enough so that Creation perishes without further delay so sparing the troupe any further suffering.

I determine that I will ignore my neighbours who will surely question me about why the disorder of Creation has returned to us even after the Silencing of Weelap and the twins and as the long silent wind slowly becomes more powerful I choose to display a calm and fearless manner as if I am not bothered

by what is happening around me.

I carefully pick the yellow bananas that are the ration for my early feed and then I squat down with my tail arranged comfortably behind me before I slowly chew and quietly pray that I will soon determine some worthy answers to the mysteries that surround me.

When I have finished eating and after I have spoken my thanks to the Spirit of the Raft I gather up the empty skins of the yellow bananas that I will take with me to the back of the Raft where soon I must rid myself of my waste but before I can begin my walk an agitated messenger arrives who brings with him some surprising news.

My fellow tells me with great excitement that those of the troupe at the front of the Raft have witnessed the waters of the mighty Ocean as they now splash up higher against the front side of the Raft because the companion wake of ripples and waves that travel with our sacred journey has clearly grown bigger.

Despite that this news is completely unexpected it is not difficult to determine what is happening and as I dismiss him I say to the messenger that we must all welcome this change to the order of our lives for surely now the Raft travels faster across the waters of the mighty Ocean and the troupe will reach the promised destination beyond the far horizon all the sooner.

The chatter in my head then tells me that I can surely witness for myself the faster speed of our journey when I look from the back of the Raft where I will be able to see the long tail of waste that gets left behind us and so I quickly set off with the long silent wind pressing against my back and with a feeling of uneasiness tightening my belly.

I have so very nearly reached the back of the Raft when the Cloud-rain starts to fall again and despite the long silent wind pushing its waters strongly from behind me and despite the slippery flooded surface of the Raft I determine that I will continue on my way but only after walking a short distance more do I see another brief but mighty flash of bright light which the deluge of Cloud-rain does not hide from me.

Very soon after the flash of light another very loud bark sounds out which seems to come from the Clouds above my head and it is followed without any delay by more noisy growling sounds so that the power of this disorder makes me want to cower down and to cover my head with my hands.

But I do not stop and as I carefully step forward I pray to the Spirit of the Raft to thank Her for protecting me from the flash of bright light and I am

greatly relieved when at last I see the back of the Raft where I determine that I am alone.

I stop some little distance from the edge and I keep safely away from the drop down into the waters of the mighty Ocean below because I determine that with so much water washing around my feet and with the long silent wind pushing so forcefully against my back I could easily slip and fall and so I crouch down and I slowly crawl my way to the edge in the hope that squatting there will still be possible.

Even in the gloom of the dark shadow of the Cloud-shade and despite the Cloud-rain rushing past my face as I gaze down over the edge I can see from the larger ripples and waves of our companion wake below me that the Raft is truly travelling with more haste.

As I determine that the long tail of waste will now be too far behind the Raft for me to see it just as it will be hidden from me by the Cloud-rain the chatter in my head then questions why the agitation of the companion wake seems to make the waters of the mighty Ocean look further away and the drop down into them longer than before.

Without an answer I crawl back from the edge until I am far enough away to feel safe again and there I squat down and I rid myself of my waste upon the surface of the Raft while the flow of water around me washes the brown mess and the empty skins of the yellow bananas away and down into the waters of the mighty Ocean.

Then I make my tail comfortable and I just stay squatting where I am feeling wet and miserable while I wait for the powerful force either to change the order of Creation back to being harmonious again or to make the changes even greater so that the Raft perishes together with the troupe upon it and surely all of Creation too.

The Cloud-rain and the long silent wind do not soon stop and there are many more bright flashes of light which I can still see even when I close my eyes and after each flash there is a great barking sound which brings with it a loud lingering growling noise which I truly do not want to hear.

The long wait is without any comfort or distraction and I can do nothing but listen to the chatter in my head which tries to determine how I am going to guide Lord Simotan about why the Raft is travelling faster and why there are long shining fingers of bright light that point down from the dark mass of Clouds that cover the Sky.



I also question if Skyglo is still a threat to me and if I should be afraid of her but I have no answers and I tell myself that to fear anything now will have no purpose if the growing disorder of Creation does not end and the journey of the Raft does not endure.

I wait and I wait until I determine that surely there is no hope of me seeing Creation harmonious again but then at last the bright flashes of light stop pointing down their long shining fingers and the Clouds stop sending their Cloud-rain so that the gloom around me lightens a little.

But there is no joy for me and I pray for some warmth from the Sun before I carefully start to groom the water from my fur and even after I finish and my mane is moving about freely because of the long silent wind that continues to push passed it the dark shadow of the Cloud-shade remains upon Creation as a mass of large drifting grey and white Clouds cover over the Sky from far horizon to far horizon.

When I am ready to leave the back of the Raft I carefully approach the edge again to see if there is any more change to the speed that the Raft is travelling and when I glance down I have to close my eyes and then open them again for at first I can not determine what I am seeing.

The Raft has truly grown taller because the drop down into the waters of the mighty Ocean below me is so much more than it should be.

There is also a swirling and agitated companion wake all along the back of the Raft that looks as if there are numerous cold and hungry sharks rising up to feed but I can not see any large grey shapes that are causing this disturbance and so I determine that the Raft truly does journey faster even as it also grows taller out of the mighty Ocean's waters.

Then I search through the gloom for the long straight tail of waste that I should still be able to see and despite looking far beyond the unsettled surface waters of the mighty Ocean behind the Raft I can not see anything of it.

The chatter in my head is not without much confusion but I determine that Lord Simolas will not speak any commands about these changes to both the size of the Raft and the speed of its journey until he has listened to my guidance and so I hurry off to the given place of the Alpha where on arriving I find only his Consort Coban - daughter of Cobut.

Coban was my choice of female to Bond with Lord Simolas when he needed to take a mate and she has since then always been grateful to me because she was never one to attract the lustful desires of the males in the troupe and had

only her talent for duty and obedience to favour her together with her tough and sturdy form that promised to birth a strong and healthy Alpha-to-be.

Her breasts and belly as well as her rump have all started to sag now and the leathery skin around her eyes has become creased but as the Consort of the Alpha she is much respected because she remains reliable and calm just as she is now even after she has witnessed and learned of the many strange and fantastic changes to Creation.

Her thick red fur ruffles because of the long silent wind as we greet each other politely and I give her the sign of Offering before she tells me that Lord Simolas has gone to the front of the Raft to see for himself the larger companion wake thrown up by our faster journey to the far horizon and she scowls just a little when she says that she is anxious about him since the many long shining fingers of bright light now come to menace the Raft and she pleads with me to protect her precious mate.

I tell her that it is surely the will of the great and wise God Gonamana together with His loyal Consort and their obedient Spirit servants and that if any members of the troupe had been Silenced and especially if Lord Simolas had been harmed then the news of it would surely have reached her very quickly.

And then I tell her that she should pray for the order and harmony to return to the sacred journey so that her precious son Simolan will enjoy without bother the celebration with his fellows when soon he is welcomed into the troupe as an adult.

She thanks me for my words and she adds that she will also pray that the members of the troupe will not be too distracted to enjoy the rites of singing and dancing that will be expected of them at the ceremony of Adulthood now that the ancient custom of feasting on yellow bananas is not allowed.

The Sun is still hidden and the long silent wind is still gently pushing against me when I leave Coban at the place of the Alpha and I have not walked far along the pathways that lead forward along the middle of the Raft when I see that very many other members of the troupe have also chosen to visit the front edge of the Raft because the further I walk the more mobbed become the pathways.

My fellows that fill the pathways between the beds of yellow bananas ahead of me are patiently waiting for those that have arrived before them to spread out along the front edge of the Raft and I determine that my journey to the long pathway there and to the places that lead from it with views down onto the

waters of the mighty Ocean will be very slow.

None of my fellows look joyful as they shuffle forwards but they natter excitedly as whispered news passes back to them and when they see me approaching the gathering they do not seem able to determine what to do or what to say to me for they are all surely confused about how much of the disorder of Creation is because of my terrible powers.

I chose not to speak with any of them and as I look around to see if either Lord Simolas or Novice Tofas are nearby a gap appears in the Clouds above the far horizon to the side of the Raft and everything is suddenly brightened and warmed.

We all gaze in silence to where this welcome light is coming from and between the Clouds we see that the Sun has reached the point in its journey across the Sky where if those that sleep furthest from the front of the Raft want to return to their chosen places before the cycle of darkness begins then they will need to start walking there now.

There is then a lot of natter amongst my fellows as the Sun becomes hidden from us again by the merging of the Clouds and the crowds ahead of me start to jostle and barge each other so that I determine I will walk across to the side edge of the Raft where surely I can look at the Raft's companion wake from there.

When I arrive at the side of the Raft there is already a line of my fellows quietly standing along the edge as they gaze downwards passed their feet and as I find myself a place alongside them where I too am able to look down at the surface waters of the mighty Ocean below I witness a view that is even stranger than what I saw from the back of the Raft.

It seems that the Raft has continued to grow taller so that now its surface with both the Troupe and the crop of yellow bananas upon it is even higher above the waters of the mighty Ocean than before and when I see how long the drop has become to the disturbance of the companion wake below me I am so overwhelmed that my fellows have to take hold of my arms when they see that I am unsteady.

I thank them with many kind words and I step back so that in safety I can try to determine what the purpose of this change can be.

"Wise Tomas. What is happening...?" Asks one of my fellows in a quiet voice that displays his awe and his fear of the view before him.

"...for surely now the sacred journey is in danger". He adds.

“We must not try to question what we can not determine...” I reply to them all as they turn to me for guidance and because the chatter in my head is without order I can only add.

“...it is the will of great and wise God Gonamana - Praise Him.”

And they all solemnly respond together by pointing to the Sky as they chant.

“Praise Him.”

“And His loyal Consort the Spirit of the Raft.” I then add as I start to pray that She will soon guide me as to what the powerful force means to achieve as it surely brings about these changes.

I return carefully to the edge of the Raft and I stand with my fellows without speaking as we watch not only how our precious home slowly continues to grow taller but also how it seems to travel faster so that the companion wake splashes up the newly formed fabric of the Raft's straight side with more of a noisy agitation while unruly waves are sent out to disturb the usually calm flat waters of the mighty Ocean.

As those of my fellows that need to return to their chosen places skulk away in shocked wonder I begin to hear a slow change in the sound that reaches up from the excitement in the surface waters below and as those of us left all stare down with puzzled curiosity we at last see that underneath the waves of the companion wake spreading out from the side of the Raft there is a wide shoulder of fabric where the base of our precious home has also now grown wider.

None of us dares to question why our Raft is changing so much and it is not long before the wide shoulder of new fabric growing out from the base of the Raft has grown taller too so that the waters of the mighty Ocean no longer roll and tumble along its flattened length as the Raft travels onwards.

From the height we now are above it the newly grown piece of the Raft looks to be about the same width as the place of rituals and as the surface of it starts to dry we can see that even in the growing gloom it looks to have a rough grey appearance that is not like the smooth green flatness of the tightly interwoven tangle of branches that is the fabric of the rest of the Raft.

My belly tightens as I determine that surely the journey of the Raft can not endure many more of these incredible changes that are happening and the chatter in my head recalls how often I have walked along the familiar pathway that leads around the edge of the Raft and how often I have passed by this place to enjoy seeing the ripples of the gently moving companion wake just below me

as they reflected the light from the Sun that did endow the yellow bananas at the front of the Raft with a special quality.

And I try to picture how it would look now if the Sun was allowed to shine its light on the distant confusion of waves I see beyond the limit of the newly grown parts of the Raft and how it would be reflected from the huge ripples that now spread out for such a long way from the Raft.

“Wise Tomas...” I hear said from nearby and looking round I see Novice Tofas.

He has approached me upon the same pathway that I too walked along and I see that behind him is his faithful mate Roomis with his precious daughter Toomis who both stay in a place between the beds of yellow bananas that is safe distance from the edge as they hold hands and grin playfully because the long silent wind moves the hairs of their fur about.

“...we were returning to our chosen place and we saw you here...” And as he too stares down at the changes below he adds.

“...this can only be from the magnificent hand of the great and wise God Gonamana Himself - praise Him.” And we all respond as we should.

“Praise Him...indeed Novice Tofas...” I add.

“...for His design is mighty and powerful even if His purpose is hidden from us.”

And then I hear a voice from nearby that asks.

“Most Wise Tomas and Novice Tofas also. Are we not surely looking at His Omens that were spoken of in the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors and which foretell the coming of the end of the sacred journey when we will soon arrive at the promised destination beyond the far horizon?”

It is Maglit - son of Tamlit - who has been a member of the troupe for many more cycles of darkness and light since passed than most of us and I shake my head as I answer him.

“Maglit - son of Tamlit - Take care. Omens are not spoken of in the words of the New-Ways and Troupe-Lore of Old. To speak of them will surely not favour you with those who would judge you.” And he looks away with a shamed look and speaks no more.

Novice Tofas nods his approval at me and then he says.

“Wise Tomas. Soon we will all surely be made to sleep and you will not walk to the place of the Spirit-Guide before the Moon rises up behind these Clouds. Join us at our given place for you would honour both me and my loyal mate.”

Before I accept his kind offer I take another look down at the vast new shape of the Raft below me and I see how the shoulder of rough grey fabric is growing a slope at its outer edge that disappears down into the waters of the mighty Ocean but as I can not determine its purpose I just nod my head and I turn away.

Then I follow Novice Tofas to where Roomis and Toomis are waiting and together we all take a pathway that leads towards their chosen place amongst the beds of yellow bananas that are nearer to the middle of the Raft.

On our way we meet Simolan who is with Skyglo and after we greet each other politely we natter briefly about how things have changed for us all since the start of this cycle of light.

“Wise Tomas. There is much belief amongst those of the troupe that our sacred journey will soon be over as the Raft is surely preparing for its arrival at the promised destination.” Says Simolan.

“There is talk of Omens...” He then adds lowering his voice a little.

“...do you believe that this is so?”

But before I can give Simolan an answer it is Novice Tofas that quickly replies as he grins politely.

“Please Simolan - son of Lord Simolas - do not talk of that which is not to be spoken of for it does not show respect to Wise Tomas or to yourself.” And as a way of appeasing both Simolan and myself he turns to Skyglo who has been listening quietly and he says.

“Skyglo - daughter of Sunaglo. What does the chatter in your head tell you of these happenings?” And before she answers she carefully looks across at me and then at Simolas.

“Novice Tofas. I will listen to the guidance of Wise Tomas because this new order of Creation and the changes to the Raft only puzzle me. But I am not afraid. For when I was standing in the gloom at the side of the Raft there was a gap in the Clouds that cover the Sky and the Sun shone its light so that it sparkled and glittered from the waves of the companion wake that also grows and I felt such harmony and fulfillment as if the Spirit of the Raft did speak to me.”

I look back at Skyglo in surprise and I determine that surely she can not be so openly testing me by speaking about something that I tried to picture in my head so recently and I question if despite her still being so young she truly has the bravery or the wisdom to be a real threat to me.

“Wise Tomas...” Says Novice Tofas in the quiet pause that follows after

Skyglo's words.

“The cycle of darkness will wait for none of us.”

And so Simolan and Skyglo hurry away leaving Novice Tofas and me to lead Roomis and Toomis to their chosen place where we quickly feed before the growing darkness tells us to settle down and to prepare for sleep.

## 4. II

The pain from my tail awakens me when the cycle of darkness is still upon the Raft and when the chatter returns to my head I do not need to look up to determine that the Moon is again hidden from me by a covering of Clouds.

The long silent wind is still pushing across the Raft and I look across to see that it is ruffling the fur on the back of Roomis as she sleeps with her body pressed up against Novice Tofas and I feel very alone as I recall how Dolfis always held me like that when she and I were sleeping together.

My dream-pictures have not left me and so I close my eyes again to let their recall fill my head.

I see at first that I am looking down at the surface of the Raft and my own long dark shadow is stretched out before me.

“Look at me.” A voice calls out from somewhere and when I turn I see that Jilan - daughter of Gordan - is standing some distance from me.

Her belly is big with a new young one growing inside it and in front of her squats Marolan who is watching for his new brother to be birthed.

Jilan then squats down before her young son and she opens wide her legs so that I can see her seed-hole which has the form of a breach in the surface of the Raft that has not yet healed and from it a flood of birthing-waters start to pour.

Then her seed-hole grows wider and Marolan reaches forward and takes from it a new young one that surely is his brother and he holds it so that the wet fur of the infant is close to his face but his eyes are looking up at me.

I stare back at him and my kind feelings suddenly turn to feelings of dread as I see Marolan bite into the neck of his young brother using the long sharp teeth that I have not seen him have before now.

Then Marolan grins at me as he chews at the torn red flesh that he has taken and the torrent of infant blood that now spills downwards mixes with the flood of birthing-waters that washes around his feet and I want to call out but my



throat does not have a voice.

All around us breaches then appear in the surface fabric of the Raft that straight away fill up with the birthing-waters that continue to flow so very freely from the seed-hole of Jilan.

“Look how the light from the Sun reflects from the Pools of Hurt Wise Tomas...” Says a voice which can only be that of Skyglo.

“...the Spirit of the Raft speaks to you.” And then she laughs loudly and surely with much disrespect.

She is standing alongside Simolan at the edge of the Raft and their feet and legs are hidden because the birthing-waters that flow across the surface of the Raft are suddenly so very deep as they pour away and into the waters of the Mighty Ocean.

Both Skyglo and Simolan each hold an infant in their arms and they gaze down at them with grins on their faces.

The infants are the twin sons of Tybol before they were Silenced and Simolan is holding Tyfis who is the bigger of the twins and Skyglo is holding the smaller Weebol.

Then I see that the Cloud-rain is falling and its waters add to the deluge already on the Raft and it becomes a torrent that washes me off my feet and over to the edge of the Raft where I pass between the legs of Skyglo and Simolan who are now both so tall as to have their heads surrounded by dark Clouds.

Then I am falling and there is nothing but darkness and a voice from far away that is calling out my name.

“Wise Tomas!” And then again I hear it.

“Wise Tomas...” And it is the voice of Novice Tofas.

“Wise Tomas you must awaken” He says as I open my eyes at last and I see him staring back at me.

I hear the chatter returning to my head and it tells me that I have been sleeping again.

“You have slept much Wise Tomas...” Says Novice Tofas excitedly as he stands over me with his shadow keeping the early Sun from my face.

“...but now I must awaken you...” He says urgently as I watch the light from the Sun glowing on his mane that moves about because of the long silent wind.

Behind him is a clear blue Sky and on his face is a wide grin.

“...news has just spread to us...” He adds quickly.

“...the promised destination has been witnessed at the far horizon.”

## 4. 12

The wondrous news surely spreads without delay to all in the troupe and even as I stand up to stretch the stiffness from my limbs Novice Tofas and I witness many of our fellows hurrying excitedly towards the front of the Raft in an ecstatic rush to reach the edge where they can see clearly what lies ahead.

Before we too can join them we hear Brandas - son of Brandak – who calls out to us as he passes by telling us that he has instructed his Deed-servers to clear a pathway along the middle of the Raft which is only to be used by the wise and revered ones of the troupe.

And so Novice Tofas and I feed on our rations of yellow bananas and we natter together as we try to stay calm before at last he and I leave Roomis and Toomis and we hurry forward to seek out the Deed-servers who show us how to avoid the pathways that are mobbed.

Soon we approach the front of the Raft where we greet the members of the council of Elders who are already gathered there and they tell us that Lord Simolas and the other wise and revered ones of the troupe will also surely soon arrive.

Eagerly I look to the far horizon for a glimpse of the promised destination that awaits us and because I can see nothing there that is new I walk forward to stand in the space at the edge of the Raft that has been saved for me.

The view below me is shocking.

The change that has happened to the troupe's precious home since the end of the last cycle of light since passed is incredible.

The base of the Raft has grown even bigger and its vast new size and its strange new shape leave me awed.

The side of the Raft beneath my feet is still the same great height as before but the rough grey flattened shoulder sticking out all along its length has continued to grow taller and the slope at its outer edge now reaches down a

great distance before it disappears beneath the surface waters of the mighty Ocean.

I determine that I must be looking down onto what can only be a very broad pathway directly below me which leads all the way along the front of the Raft but what puzzles me greatly is the purpose of its outer edge that slopes away to meet the angry companion wake at its lowest part now such a great distance from me.

And even as I stand with my fellows and we all stare down in silence at the agitated water that rises and falls along the bottom of the slope and even as I watch the big unruly waves being pushed ahead by this strange new base of the Raft I determine that we are too far away from it now to hear any sound that the companion wake makes despite the waters of the mighty Ocean turning white as they splash and jump.

But just as the chatter in my head questions the purpose of these changes to the Raft and why they are needed now if we truly do approach our destination I look out again to the far horizon where our journey is heading and again I fail to witness anything new that is waiting for us there.

“Novice Tofas...” I say after a pause.

“...has the news of the promised destination been spoken falsely?”

And he replies without looking away from the sight of the growing Raft that stretches out below him.

“Wise Tomas. I see only the great changes to our precious home.”

But then several members of the council of Elders step forward and together they point to a place on the horizon that is not directly in front of the Raft before one of them says.

“Wise Tomas and Novice Tofas also. It is over there that something has been seen. You must look with very open eyes.”

Slowly I look along the line of the far horizon where the calm blue waters of the mighty Ocean meet with the many large clouds that have started to rise up into the Sky and at last I see a tiny dark distant shadow that seems to be very small and very far away.

It is truly not much to witness but the chatter in my head tells me that I should be full of joy because this is surely the first ever sighting of something other and new since the Raft was set upon the waters of the mighty Ocean in a vast Creation with only the cold and hungry sharks to pursue its journey with the troupe.

And then I determine what good fortune we truly have to be of the generation of monkeys that first sees what the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors did speak of as the promised destination for His chosen ones and a new home for us all at the end of a sacred journey.

“Wise Tomas...” Asks one of the members of the council of Elders beside me.

“...what is your guidance about the new form that the Raft has taken for its arrival at the promised destination that is soon to be achieved?”

I turn to Novice Tofas to see if he has an answer but he only grins with awe at the dark distant shadow ahead and so I look down again at the vast amount of newly grown Raft below me and I search for anything that might betray its purpose.

“The fabric of the new broad shoulder beneath us that has now dried is rough and grey...” I say as if speaking only to myself.

“...and it is not like the smooth flattened branches that is the fabric of the Raft beneath our feet. And here...” I continue as I point straight down.

“...do you see where the side of the Raft has now grown tall? The branches at its base are not so flattened and they reach out as if they grow down into the new shoulder that is surely a place to walk upon. A vast pathway that slopes away even as it grows and spreads.”

“It is mysterious indeed...” Says Novice Tofas who is still looking to the far horizon.

“...perhaps it is only with this new form that the Raft can journey faster in its hurry to reach that which we have been promised.”

I stare down to where the new sloping front of the Raft is pushing its vast companion wake through the calm blue waters of the mighty Ocean ahead of it but before I can say more we all distracted by voices behind us calling out that Lord Simolas is approaching and that we must give him and his company space to stand at the front edge of the Raft.

But I am truly unable to respond because something is suddenly giving me an overwhelming feeling of worthiness that changes the chatter in my head and takes away all the strength from my flesh.

It is as if I can feel cold wet fingers touching the sides of my face while a familiar calm voice within me promises to tell me words that I have not yet heard spoken before now.

I determine that it is not a Spirit that has come to speak with me because the voice in my head is surely my own chatter despite sounding different and is

surely beyond my guidance as if it belongs to a dream-picture.

The voice tells me to watch the waters of the mighty Ocean that lie ahead and its surface that seems to be so very patient and steadfast until the huge waves of the Raft's companion wake are forced upon it by the approach of the Raft.

I then hear the voice repeat the words again and again but each time more slowly.

And even from the great height that I now am above it all I then start to see that the turmoil in the water itself is somehow slowing down.

As the the movement of the waves and the voice in my head both become slower so the sound of the natter that I can hear behind me becomes quieter.

Everything around me seems as if it is moving further away except for the Raft beneath my feet.

Then it is only the journey of the Raft that my calm chatter speaks of and it tells me to feel for the movement of our precious home as it travels onwards.

I feel down inside myself and into my feet where with my skin I search for any movement that might betray the tremendous struggle that must now be needed for the Raft to push its mighty bulk with such a new urgency even as it is resisted by the vast expanse of mighty Ocean in its path.

But there is only stillness.

The Raft is still.

The waters of the mighty Ocean ahead have also become still.

Nothing in all of Creation seems to be moving and a quiet comfort surrounds me as I stare forward at the motionless waves at the front of the Raft and I listen again for the calm voice inside my head.

All I can feel is a thumping in my chest as I slowly determine that something important is happening because Creation around me is starting to turn itself about so that what was true is now false and what was false is now true.

I feel safe as if hugged by a calm hushed stillness.

And then at last the waves ahead of me slowly start to silently jostle and roll against the rough grey base of the Raft again and in awe at how the slowing and then the stillness of Creation was achieved I question if what I have been looking at was truly seen.

"I will surely trust what I witness..." I tell myself.

"...for the only movement that is true is that which I can see with my eyes."

And a warm feeling of worthiness comforts me.

"I have been taught well and I have been taught often..." I then say.

“...but have I been taught wisely?” I silently ask myself.

I keep staring at what is ahead even as the profound change that is happening within me completes itself and I determine that all of Creation is truly now strange to me and that I am surrounded by nothing but falsity.

The loneliness that I then feel is painful when the voice in my head tells me that I am already letting go of surely the last of the important truths that were passed down to me from the ancestors even after abandoning not only my unquestioning belief in the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors but also my doubtless faith in the great and wise God Gonamana and His obedient Spirit servants.

And I stare at the movement of the waters of the mighty Ocean at the front of the Raft that have become the centre of all things even as the other movements of Creation start up again around them and the voices from my fellows nearby slowly begin to reach my ears once more.

I become aware of Lord Simolas and his loyal mate Coban who together with Simolas and his sisters Cobolan and Cobolas are all arriving at the pathway along the front of the Raft to find a clear view ahead.

My fellows next to me step back and greet those newly arrived with much respect but I stay where I am and I do not even turn to make them welcome because I am still shocked by the worthiness of the new wisdom that I have determined.

The calm hushed stillness that hugged me has now gone and my familiar chatter has replaced the voice that I was hearing in my head and so I close my eyes and I determine that there is now a certainty that nothing will be the way that it was before because everything is truly turned around.

“Wise Tomas...” Says Lord Simolas with an anxious voice from behind me. “...Where is the promised destination for I see it not.”

I open my eyes and I gaze ahead like one who has never before seen the far horizon and I quietly point at the tiny dark distant shadow that has caused the troupe such excitement.

“Can that truly be the promised destination?” Asks Cobolas who displays no joy in her voice.

“Surely we still have far to travel.” Says Coban calmly.

“But we travel in this direction...” Says Cobolan pointing directly ahead as she steps forward to find herself at the edge of the Raft.

“...may the Spirits save us.” She then cries out as she sees the extent of the

long drop down onto the shoulder of the Raft's base below her and the very much longer slope down to the waters of the mighty Ocean beyond it and she quickly steps back again.

"What is this new purpose?" Says Lord Simolas as he carefully approaches the edge of the Raft.

"Lord Simolas..." I announce in a formal way despite the overwhelming sadness that I feel about the important new guidance that I must offer him.

"...I request leave to speak with you without delay about something that determines the fate of the troupe." And all that hear my words become quiet as if they are afraid that perhaps I plan to use my terrible powers to take control upon Raft.

"Fear not..." I say to reassure Lord Simolas.

"...I want only to speak of a deceit and a falsity that we must learn to picture clearly in our heads. Novice Tofas. Please summon Gordan - son of Gordak. We will gather over there..." I add as I point to a place some distance from the pathway.

"...and Brandas - son of Brandak - please ask our fellows there to move away."

Brandas carefully and politely clears the place chosen by me for the urgent gathering that I have requested and when Novice Tofas returns with Gordan I ask them both to be comfortable with Lord Simolas and me and we squat down close to each other so that none of our fellows will hear our natter.

I move my tail to one side so that it aches less and as I prepare to speak of the new wisdom that the troupe must surely be told I feel again a painful loneliness as I determine how different I am from my fellows.

Water covers my eyes and the chatter in my head questions if I am truly a member of the troupe and not some wise phantom that is lost amongst these foolish monkeys and I determine that I must not laugh despite that I am close to starting because I would surely not be able to stop and I would quickly become lost from myself.

"Lord Simolas. Revered chief Elder and Novice Tofas..." I begin as I try with much effort to keep my voice quiet and steady despite the turmoil of feelings within me.

"...prepare yourselves to learn how the troupe continues to keep a faith and a belief in a purpose and a destiny that even the coming of the New-ways did not teach us is very much a falsity."



They all look at each other with puzzled looks but before any of them can speak I say.

“What we see under the Clouds at the far horizon is truly a mystery to me but I have surely determined that it is not the promised destination where our journey will end...” And because Lord Simolas moves to speak I scowl at him and I sign that he should not interrupt me.

“...because the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors have again been false with us and they have passed on their falsities to the words of the New-Ways and Troupe-Lore of Old.”

Now they all display surprise and shock at the boldness of my words and Novice Tofas looks around to see if any members of the troupe beyond the beds of yellow bananas surrounding us are hearing my words.

I determine from their silence that they are waiting for me to explain myself and so I order the very simple truths that need to be spoken and without any joy at sharing my burden I say.

“We are told that we are His chosen ones that He saved from the waters of the Cloud-rain that fell down upon the Homeland of Dry-Creation both in the cycles of darkness and in the cycles of light that He made numberless until there was a mighty Ocean without limits. We are also told that we journey across the waters of this mighty Ocean to a promised destination beyond the far horizon that will be our reward for the respect that we always showed to Him and to His Creation...” And I shake my head slowly as I add.

“...but this is falsely told to us.” And I stare at them unkindly so as to defy any interruptions.

“Because for all of the generations of monkeys that have been birthed and then since Silenced after the first of our ancestors stepped onto the surface of the Raft the troupe has journeyed nowhere...” And I pat the surface of the Raft with the creased leathery palm of my hand.

“...for this that we name the Raft is somehow part of the Homeland of Dry-Creation and it does not move.” My fellows are surely too shocked by my Heresy to reply and so I continue.

“We need only look around us to surely witness that there is no journey for us to the far horizon because it is the waters of the mighty Ocean that make a journey and they pass us by.” And with a wave of my arm in front of their confused faces I indicate what is ahead of the Raft and I add.

“What is beyond the far horizon that sends its waters to us and where the

waters go after they carry our waste away to the far horizon behind us I can not tell you..." And I pause briefly before I say.

"...but it seems that now the waters have an urgency to leave us and they flow more quickly away perhaps to spill into some magnificent breach that is so wide and so deep that it will take a mighty Ocean to fill it up..." And as I feel a great sadness and also a great tiredness start to overwhelm me I finish by saying.

"...but here the Homeland of Dry-Creation keeps us and here we will stay. Just as here we have always stayed."

I do not have to wait long before Lord Simolas reacts.

"Wise Tomas..." He says slowly and deliberately.

"... you have guided us with many things before now and your wisdom has served us well. But never before have I heard such a complete denial all that the troupe holds sacred and it surely shows to us all that you must be completely lost from yourself..." He becomes angrier as he continues.

"...you have truly shocked and offended me and surely my fellows here also. Without delay I must seek guidance from the council of Elders about this dreadful falsity. We have long respected and feared your terrible powers but I surely can not allow such Heresy to be spoken. What say you Gordan - son of Gordak?"

"Wise Tomas and I have shared close fellowship since his father Tomag was neighbour to my father Gordak a generation before the coming of the New-Ways..." Gordan says quietly as he shakes his head and gazes at me sadly.

"...and he has truly risked much for the good of the troupe. But to deny His sacred journey even as we witness His promised destination for us at the far horizon is truly to deny the great and wise God Gonamana Himself - praise Him."

And as Lord Simolas and Gordan point to the dark Clouds covering the Sky they chant together.

"Praise Him."

But together both Novice Tofas and I do not move and we do not speak as we refuse to respond.

Lord Simolas and Gordan look at each in disbelief just as I turn in speechless surprise to Novice Tofas.

Novice Tofas calmly looks at each one of us before he says.

"I have eyes and I see what Wise Tomas sees. We have been betrayed."

## 4. 13

I am proud of Novice Tomas for his loyalty to me and I admire him for being so quick to determine the truth of my new wisdom but I am angry with him for choosing to risk punishment by supporting me with a deliberate denial of the respect demanded by the words of the New-Ways and Troupe-Lore of Old when speaking His name.

I continue to stare at Novice Tofas as he and I listen to Lord Simolas discussing with his chief Elder about what they should do following the Heresy spoken by the troupe's Spirit-Guide and by his apprentice also but then we are all suddenly distracted by the troupe around us as they celebrate the sighting of the promised destination and the end of the sacred journey that is to come.

All too quickly there has grown a boisterous and unrestrained display of released emotions by the many of our fellows that are gathered so closely together at the front of the Raft and without the control of a formal ceremony to guide their actions they soon become a very large unruly mob that is gripped by a shared excitement that overwhelms them all.

And so Lord Simolas and Gordan are urgently summoned away to help Brandas and his Deed-servers in trying to discipline the troupe and they leave Novice Tofas and I watching nervously as all about us there is extremely confused and disorderly behaviour.

We stay apart from the celebrations and remain squatting amongst the beds of yellow bananas where we hear loud singing and we witness many of our fellows beginning to dance with a strange frenzy so that they soon become hysterically joyful as they cry out to each other that truly they are the chosen ones.

Then on the pathways and in the places between the pathways we see large gatherings that chant prayers of thanks to the great and wise God Gonamana and to His faithful Spirit servants and the emotions of the troupe quickly grow even more frantic.

Novice Tofas and I are too afraid to move and being dismayed by what we are witnessing and surely helpless to stop any trouble from happening we can only watch and hope for the best as the growing disorder starts to include a greedy feasting on yellow bananas by those who call out that the promised destination will provide everything that can be desired and that soon the Raft will be needed no more.

And just as it seems that there can be no further disregard for all things lawful and restrained we see that a group of our fellows are mating excitedly with each other which arouses many others to do the same until uncontrolled lustful desires soon spread to every other part of the Raft that we can see around us.

“Wise Tomas. What shall we do?” Asks Novice Tofas in a voice that betrays how very anxious he is.

“Novice Tofas. Truly the troupe believes that because so many of them together disregard both their discipline and their responsibility they can behave with each other as they want...” I reply spitting out my words with disgust.

“...and there is surely nothing we can do. But like them...” I add slowly.

“...we surely not need fear our due punishment for how we behaved with Lord Simolas because there are truly too many of the troupe now that are disobedient with acts of Heresy.”

Then we remain squatting but without speaking more and we continue to watch the disorder with growing dread until a long shining finger of bright light suddenly and briefly points down from the dark Clouds above us and with its touch it leaves a number of our fellows lying still on the surface of the Raft nearby.

The demented celebrations falter and then stop completely when the noise of a deafening bark sounds out and this is quickly followed a long loud growling sound which together with a torrent of Cloud-rain that suddenly falls seems to tell the members of the troupe to recall their self control so that they all shamefully hurry away to their chosen places.

The falling of the Cloud-rain truly brings with it a feeling of loneliness when it makes seeing and talking difficult just as it makes walking a bother and when Novice Tofas and I return to his chosen place and we both squat down next to Roomis and Toomas there is nothing we can do but to quietly watch the floods of water wash around our feet as we pray that the next long shining finger of bright light will not find us.

The Cloud-rain continues to beat down and it falls from many different

directions as the long silent wind pushes it about and for all of the journey that the Sun makes across the Sky behind its covering of dark shifting Clouds the powerful force does not stop sending its menace to the Raft even as the cycle of light surely approaches its end.

And so I am not able to speak with Novice Tofas about the new wisdom that tells of the Raft being somehow part of the Homeland of Dry-Creation that does not move and I determine that while I wait for the sleep that is demanded of the troupe by the coming of the cycle of darkness I will pray that there truly is a Spirit of the Raft that will help me with guidance.

Then I picture the Raft as being the only thing that does not move in a vast and endless Creation where everything else all around it travels from somewhere to somewhere else and I try to determine what can be the dark distant shadow that the waters of the mighty Ocean surely carries along on its surface and with no hope of being given an answer soon I also question from where does it journey.

Soon we all settle down to sleep because our bodies command it in the growing darkness and I yearn for the warmth and the touch of my precious Dolfis to comfort me as I shiver in my wet heavy fur and as the chatter leaves my head my belly tightens as I determine that truly there will be no deliverance now from this place that is and always will be our only precious home.

## 4. 14

I awaken feeling cold and stiff and the ache in the base of my tail makes me scowl when I stand up to stretch my limbs.

There is some little glow of light behind the Clouds that cover the far horizon where the Sun will begin its journey across the Sky and as the chatter returns to my head I give thanks that the Cloud-rain has stopped falling and the long silent wind has passed from the Raft.

I close my eyes and I let the dream-pictures from my sleep pass away because they give me a feeling of dread despite that I can not recall them clearly.

I quickly groom my fur which has already dried and I determine that I must visit the back of the Raft even before I seek out Lord Simolas to try again to guide him about the falsity of the sacred journey that has been passed down to us from the ancestors.

I choose not to wait for my fellows to awaken and I pick the yellow bananas that are my ration before I leave the chosen place of my precious son and I feed as I walk while the chatter in my head questions why the Raft is truly without a journey and why the troupe is truly without a destiny and I also question the purpose of the powerful force and purpose of the dark distant shadow that has appeared at the far horizon.

Then I question if Skyglo is still a threat to me despite the Heresy that Lord Simolas has accused me of speaking and I try to determine how the troupe will be punished for the Heresies that they all displayed when as a mob they became lost from themselves and without any answers my head begins to ache.

As the gloom passes from the Raft with the coming of the cycle of light I am able to see more of what is on both sides of the pathways that I am following and as I pass along I look into the chosen places of my fellows who remain sleeping in their small huddled groups amongst the beds of yellow bananas.

But then I see a young female who is slumped alone on the stepping places

that lead away from one of the pathways and as I get nearer to her I become distracted by the way she is sleeping on her back with her arms and legs spread apart.

The youngster is Henloc - daughter of Tenloc - and not only do I see that her eyes are open so that they stare up at the Sky but I also see that her chest and belly are without movement and when I gently touch her hand I feel that her flesh is cold enough for her to have been long since Silenced.

My head aches more as it then questions if this passing from the troupe was caused by a long shining finger of bright light rather than by the torrent of waters from the Cloud-rain that flooded everywhere while the cycle of darkness was upon the Raft which could easily have overwhelmed this unfortunate youngster while she slept.

I lift Henloc up into my arms and I carry her to the chosen place of Tenloc which is nearby and I leave her there next to her father and his mate before I walk on feeling sad that the youngster was so alone when she passed from the troupe.

The others of my fellows are only just starting to awaken when I reach the back of the Raft and so I am alone there as I carefully approach the edge to look over so that I can see how much more of Dry-Creation below our precious home has emerged from the quickly passing waters.

The amount of rough grey fabric sloping away from the shoulder below me is immense and the waters of the mighty Ocean from which the slope rises up are now so distant that the companion wake seems very gentle indeed and I stand staring in awe at how big the Homeland of Dry-Creation must surely be.

But then I look straight down passed my feet and despite the gloom of the dark shadow cast by the huge bulk of the Raft I see the still bodies of two monkeys that are sprawled out on the rough grey flattened shoulder below me and they are both lying twisted and broken.

They seem to be so very small and I can not determine which of my fellows they are that have fallen from the back of the Raft but they are much too far away for me to help them and so I can only try to show them some respect by not letting my brown waste fall anywhere near where they are lying surely Silent.

And then when I have finished cleaning myself with the empty skins of the yellow bananas I throw them as far as I can away from the bodies which is not nearly as far as the top of the slope and the chatter in my head questions what

the cold and hungry sharks will feed on now that they can no longer approach where the cold flesh of my Silent fellows is waiting unclaimed.

I close my eyes and I pray for the Spirit of the Raft to guide me but I am distracted by the many questions that I have about the growing size of Her domain and about why the Homeland of Dry-Creation does not sprout yellow bananas if like the Raft it needs nourishment and so I open my eyes again with the dull pain still in my head and the dull pain still in the base of my tail and I look up to see that dark Clouds cover the Sky from far horizon to far horizon above me.

Without looking down again at the cold and lonely bodies that were my fellows I turn away and I follow the narrowest of the pathways that leads from the back of the Raft towards the given place of Lord Simotan and I can only scowl at those that see me passing them by as they humble themselves before me in shame because of their foolish and lawless actions when the last cycle of light since passed was upon the Raft.

I walk quickly onwards and I only stop when I see that yet another cold body has been found and it is that of a young male named Sorus - son of Soret – whose mourning father looks angrily at me when I tell him that he is not alone with his sorrow and that I will pray for the great and wise God Gonamana to bring comfort to both him and to his faithful mate even as he delivers the body of his only son to the place of rituals.

Then I hurry away on my journey until I meet with a Deed-server who tells me that Lord Simolas has already gone to visit the front of the Raft and also that Novice Tofas wants me to meet with him at the front of the Raft too where he will go and await my arrival.

I choose to seek out Novice Tofas before I meet with Lord Simolas and I soon find him not far from his chosen place where I see that he has been stopped by a gathering of sorry looking monkeys who become very anxious and full of guilt when they see me approaching them.

I tell them that I am not angry and that my guidance to them is that they must be purposeful in finding within themselves the wisdom and the discipline to behave in good order without the need to fear any retribution but they only stare back at me looking very puzzled and so I add that surely no punishment will be needed upon the Raft if we all seek to do only what is truly best for our fellows.

They seem not to hear me and so I wave them away without care which brings a grin to the face of Novice Tofas as he nods his approval and we set off



together towards the front part of the Raft where we ask our fellows if Lord Simolas is nearby.

We are told that he has gone to seek a view from the side edge of the Raft only a short distance from the front and as we set off along the pathways that will lead us there I start telling Novice Tofas about my new wisdom and that I have determined that our precious home is a living sanctuary upon the Homeland of Dry-Creation where our ancestors surely gathered with the coming of the waters of the mighty Ocean.

Novice Tofas does not question this wisdom and I am truly surprised that he only nods calmly when I then quietly tell him that I have chosen to abandon my faith in the words of the Troupe-Lore that have long since been passed down to us from the very many generations of monkeys that lived before us here upon the Raft.

But then he does become distracted and anxious when I add that surely the troupe is lost and alone in a Creation that is becoming disordered by the menace of a powerful force which will not be defeated by the great and wise God Gonamana or by His obedient Spirit servants and that we are all surely to perish if the threat grows greater because we have only the Raft to save us.

After these words we walk on in silence until we see Lord Simolas ahead of us who is nattering intently with Simolan and Skyglo as they look out to where the dark distant shadow was seen at the far horizon and something being said is making them all look less than joyful.

Novice Tofas and I are careful to approach them quietly and with great respect for we are afraid of how we will be regarded but we are greeted politely which pleases us and we join their gathering so that we too can witness the view from the edge of the Raft.

I search the gloom under the shifting Clouds for the dark distant shadow and I see that it has journeyed closer to us and that it has a form that is flattened and much like how the Raft looked before the coming of the disorder that is taking from us the waters of the mighty Ocean.

“Wise Tomas...” Says Lord Simolas at last without looking around at me.

“...can you tell us what it is that approaches us?...” And I glance at Novice Tofas who I see surely shares my joy.

“...for that is truly not the destination that we were promised beyond the far horizon.” Lord Simolas then adds with a voice that sounds tired.

“No Lord Simolas.” I reply with a display of calm and order.

“Skyglo has named it the Craft...” He then says.

“...which she speaks of as surely drifting towards us as the mighty Ocean carries it upon its moving waters.”

“Lord Simolas...” I then say cautiously as I suppress a grin.

“...and does Skyglo speak with the voice of a Heretic?”

He slowly shakes his head which seems to drop lower as if he truly is so very tired.

Many questions suddenly distract the chatter in my head but I determine that I already have the answers to many of them and I picture how in the cycles of light yet to pass none of the words passed down to us by the ancestors will be trusted and the falsities that easily trouble a foolish monkey will be abandoned so that only determined wisdom will guide the purpose of the troupe.

But the answer I do not have is about Skyglo and so I turn my head to stare at her with a silent challenge that she must prove to me that I am truly closed to her gift and when she does not react I look back at what she has named the Craft.

“Lord Simolas...” I say.

“...if Skyglo does not speak with the voice of a Heretic then what is the troupe to believe after they have so soon since passed celebrated the near achievement of a new home?”

“There is nothing but confusion and remorse that I have heard spoken...”

Replies Simolan on behalf of his father.

“...and I fear that without guidance the troupe will be lost in confusion and anxiety by all that is happening...” He adds with a steady voice as he then takes hold of Skyglo by her hand he says quietly.

“...and promises to happen.”

At hearing this Lord Simolas straightens himself up and pushes out his broad chest.

“The troupe must be told that we journey not...” He commands with a voice that displays a growing confidence.

“...and I will tell Brandas - son of Brandak - to demand that the troupe will now gather without delay at the place of rituals where we will celebrate the passing of all those who have sadly been Silenced.” And turning to me he lowers his voice to ask.

“Wise Tomas. These forces that menace us are surely powerful indeed. I beg you to appease all those that threaten my precious troupe so that no more of our

fellows will be harmed.” And without waiting for me to reply he then turns to Simolan and says.

“When the ceremony for the Silenced is ended we will accept my son Simolan into the troupe as an adult...” And he grins briefly before he turns to face the far horizon.

“...we will also tell the gathered troupe of our new wisdom. Wise Tomas. It is now that we truly need your guidance.”

And then looking up at the dark Clouds covering the Sun he says as if to himself.

“And I will pray to the Spirit of the Clouds that we do not receive its waters of the Cloud-rain until our rituals are finished.”

## 4. 15

A feeling of relief surely spreads across the Raft along with the news of the Alpha's new command because the members of the troupe can now return to routine tasks with obedient purpose just as it gives them the hope that their foolish Heresies from the last cycle of light since passed will go unpunished.

The surface of the Raft is searched for any more Silent bodies that have not yet been found and then as my fellows prepare to make their way to the place of rituals I remain alone at the side of the Raft where I try to determine why it is that Skyglo named the dark flattened shape that drifts from the far horizon as the Craft.

Then the chatter in my head questions if it is the Spirit of the Raft that has summoned this Craft and the troupe will now escape from our precious home even as it is threatened by the disorder of Creation that visits us but I determine that if the Craft continues to drift away from the far horizon in the direction that it does then it will surely pass by the Raft at such a distance that we may never witness its true form and its true purpose.

I look with very open eyes into the gloom that covers all of Creation in front of me and at the Craft that still looks so very small and so very far away and as I question if there truly is a tiny but long thin white cloud following behind it I am suddenly distracted by a gentle but mysterious movement to the side of the Raft.

In the distance but still a long way from the far horizon I see a very slightly different form to the surface waters of the mighty Ocean which despite being not easy to determine is surely about the same great length as the Raft.

I tell myself that what I see is false because the movement is suddenly gone but as I continue to stare out at this very large place on its surface the waters of the mighty Ocean again seem to gently move in a new way and the chatter in my head questions if there is a great host of cold and hungry sharks gathered in

the waters over there and perhaps they swim about performing some kind of duty or ritual.

But I have my own duties to perform at the place of rituals at the back of the Raft and I have yet to prepare the words that I will speak at the ceremony for the Silenced and then at the ceremony of Adulthood that will follow it.

I turn and I walk away from the edge of the Raft but the picture of the disturbance upon the surface waters of the mighty Ocean at the side of the Raft does not leave my head and because it seems somehow familiar to me I try to recall the dream-pictures that gave me a feeling of dread when I awoke before this cycle of light had yet begun.

## 4. 16

When I arrive at the place of rituals I am shocked by just how many still bodies have been brought there to lie on their backs in a row with their faces pointing to the Sky and when I take up my place kneeling opposite to Lord Simolas with the Silent ones between us he and I are quite some distance apart.

As soon as all of our fellows are gathered Lord Simolas stands up and he carefully speaks to us about the new wisdom that has been determined by the Wise and respected Spirit-Guide of the troupe and how the order of Creation is now changed.

His words tell us of how the Raft has truly not been travelling on a sacred journey because the promised destination was always so very close by and that only now is it being slowly revealed to us beneath the Raft by the grace of the great and wise God Gonamana Himself together with His faithful and loyal Consort.

The members of the troupe have not only been expecting to hear some incredible news about their precious home and how the words of the New-Ways and Troupe-Lore of Old have failed us all but they have also been awaiting some difficult guidance about the recent changes both to the order of Creation and to the laws of the troupe and they respond well to what Lord Simolas tells them.

Very few of them become so distressed by what they learn that they need comforting during the ceremony for the Silenced that then takes place and at the ending of the ritual when the many cold bodies are dropped from the back of the Raft to form a gruesome pile on the shoulder of Dry-Creation below us the chatter in my head tells me that most members of the troupe have determined that they must now try to follow a new and different destiny.

Then it is my duty to lead the troupe in the ancient chant of gratitude which the words of the New-Ways and Troupe-Lore of Old say must be spoken after

the Raft is rid of the Silenced but instead I picture the disturbance in the surface waters of the mighty Ocean at the side of the Raft and I speak out the words of a prayer to the Spirit of the Ocean asking for its guidance so that we do not fail the cold and hungry sharks even as we have just since offered them such a bounty of Silent flesh.

The ceremony for the Silenced is then declared finished but before the command is given for the ceremony of Adulthood to begin I speak out the words of another prayer which I plead with the Spirit of the Raft to hear and I humbly thank Her for allowing the troupe to witness all the great changes that have come to us and I then affirm the faith that the members of the troupe surely still have in Her wisdom when she chose those who by the hand of the great and wise God Gonamama Himself were Silenced and taken from the troupe.

“Simolan - son of Lord Simolas. Respected youngster of our troupe and Alpha-to-be. You will now step forward.” Lord Simolas commands proudly when he sees that I have finished speaking.

And as his son walks nervously into the middle of the place of rituals where he is surrounded by his fellows of the troupe we all stamp our feet and we whoop and we call out a prayer of thanks to the great and wise God Gonamana.

“Praise Him.” We shout as we point to the Clouds above and then the troupe begins the traditional chant that is required at the start of this ceremony.

“He gave us a noble youngster and now He gives us a noble adult who shall join the hopes of those that began the sacred journey to the joys of those who will flourish beyond the far horizon when the promised destination will be...”

And slowly the many voices falter and stop as the troupe determines that what they are repeating are meaningless words given to them by the wise and revered of the troupe who were themselves deceived by their ancestors.

I quickly step forward to direct the confusion and I speak loudly my words of congratulations to the Alpha-to-be Simolan - Son of Lord Simolas - on behalf of all members of the troupe and then when my fellows are ordered again I give the traditional guidance to those who have achieved Adulthood.

Lord Simolas then commands that the members of the council of Elders must give their signs of respect to Simolan before he must greet and be embraced by each and every fellow adult in their turn.

It has been the tradition since the coming of the New-Ways that the ceremony becomes festive with joyful singing and dancing begun by the family of the new adult but Lord Simolas warns that none now will be allowed because of the

disorder that the troupe displayed when they last chose to celebrate and he commands us to calmly return to our chosen places without delay where we must pray for our safe deliverance from all possible dangers that threaten us.

“Wise Tomas...” Says Simolan as the gathering ends and our fellows approach the various pathways that lead away from the place of rituals.

“...please accept my thanks for your kind words and for the guidance that you have given me so that I did achieve my adulthood with the wisdom that I have.”

And next to him Skyglo looks up at me with a nervous grin that tells me she surely is proud of the male that intends to Bond with her and despite my questions and my doubts about her I feel a real joy at having their fellowship.

“Simolan - son of Lord Simolas...” I reply.

“...the ways of the troupe that you will come to lead will not be as they are now but you will surely strive to do your best so that all will be proud to serve you.” And I gently squeeze his arm.

“Wise Tomas. I thank you again.” He then says and he takes Skyglo by her hand before they turn to walk away.

“Skyglo - daughter of Sunaglo...” I say gently.

“...will you stop and speak with me for I would determine what wisdom you have to witness a mystery at the far horizon and so name it the Craft?”

Skyglo turns around and she looks at me carefully as if she is seeking my purpose before she says.

“Wise Tomas. I was preparing to tell you...soon...” And she quickly looks about us to see if any other members of the troupe are near enough to hear her words.

“...for I have seen where I did not choose to look and I have heard it spoken when I did not choose to listen.” Her voice is quiet but not without confidence when she then says.

“I have learned that Others have also been seeking a promised destination beyond the far horizon and the words spoken by one of their kind has surely found a home within me...”

Skyglo’s words reach my ears but I can not seem to determine what she is saying as my belly tightens with fear and I am overwhelmed with confusion.

“...I have been told of a true journey that travels across the waters of the one mighty Ocean.... She continues.

“...a journey of great importance upon that which is named the Craft.”

I can not find words to reply and I stare at her as if there truly is nothing else



in Creation to witness but her eyes.

“Wise Tomas...” She then says.

“...I will not speak more of it now but together you and I have heard much that will truly make us all afraid.”

And before I can order the chatter in my head she turns and she walks away with Simolan who is again holding on to her hand.

My confusion is great indeed as I silently stare after them and as they join the many others on one of the pathways leading away I determine that I should follow after them and demand what wisdom Skyglo has surely shared with Simolan but not with me.

Only slowly does the chatter in my head become ordered enough for me to determine that before I speak with Skyglo again I should wait until I am ready to act for the best and so with a forced display of dignity and purpose I too walk away from the place of rituals just as the dark shadow of the Cloud-shade passes from the Raft and the Sun brings a welcome brightness to everything around me.

The sudden and very welcome warmth on my fur comforts me and I find myself grinning nervously about how it seems that I have no control over my place in Creation and when I then start to laugh I choose to walk the pathways that lead to the place of Separation at the side of the Raft where I pray that I will remain alone with none of my fellows to bother me if I should become lost from myself.

When I arrive at the place of Separation I have control over my laughter but not of my tiredness and so after easing the pain in the base of my tail I soon settle down to wait and to watch for the distant drifting Craft to move closer so that its secrets can be witnessed.

The Sun reaches the midpoint in its journey across the Sky and the dark shadow of the Cloud-shade again covers the Raft to be followed soon afterwards by the falling of the Cloud-rain in its turn and then the light from the Sun comes to warm me again just as it always has done when Creation is ordered and I give thanks that there is no long silent wind bringing its chill even as I dry and groom my fur and because I begin to feel reassured about the ordering of Creation around me I joyfully feed before I settle down to be the troupe's wise sentinel for the approach of the mysterious drifting Craft.

Off in the distance where I saw before the slight disturbance in the surface waters of the mighty Ocean I can now see waves and ripples forming like a vast

companion wake which I try to picture again as a gathering of cold and hungry sharks and I question if truly there can be so many that have gathered to frenziedly feed on something they have found there.

Looking along the side of the Raft I can see many of my fellows gathered at the edge surely to chatter excitedly about the far off drifting Craft and now more so about the new disturbance in the surface waters of the mighty Ocean that is closer and then looking down I admire the very many breaches and raised places that shape the surface of the rough grey fabric below where there is much sparkling and glinting from the numberless Pools of Hurt that have appeared after the falling of the Cloud-rain.

The Sun continues its journey and slowly the Pools of Hurt disappear just as the Craft slowly but surely drifts closer to the Raft and I continue to observe its journey under the vast Sky above it that remains clear and blue even until the ending of the cycle of light approaches when I determine that the strange feeling of excitement that has been growing in my belly since Skyglo did speak of Others that are making a true journey of great importance to a promised destination beyond the far horizon must be resolved.

And I choose to remain at the place of Separation where I settle down to sleep when the Sun reaches the end of its journey and I say a prayer full of hope to the Spirit of the Raft that surely the purpose of the drifting Craft will somehow soon be revealed to us all as will the purpose of the now greatly disturbed waters of the mighty Ocean at the side of Raft.

## 4. 17

The long silent wind is gently pressing against me as I awaken into the gloom upon the Raft and as the chatter slowly returns to my head it starts to recall the dream-pictures that I had while I slept.

I am seeing the form of Skyglo but the sight of her is somehow not what it should be and I am disturbed because I am witnessing her as she moans with pleasure while she mates with a large adult male that is not Simolan.

As they frantically satisfy their lustful desires the scent of it reaches my nostrils and I quickly become aroused.

Then I see that her fur is red with blood and some of it is coming from the mouth of the male for he has bitten her flesh and she is bleeding.

Her moans become a cry for help but I seem unable to move towards her despite wanting to help because the feeling in my belly warns me not to approach them.

Suddenly Skyglo does not call out anymore and I see that it is a smooth dark figure without a tail that has been mounting her because he has now climbed off to leave her sprawled on the surface of the Raft as he slowly walks towards me.

There is a bright yellow light coming from somewhere and in its sparkling shine I see the blood covering the black skin around the mouth of the stranger that glistens and I determine that somehow I have seen this happening before.

As he approaches me I see behind him a pair of young male twins who have appeared from nowhere and they are side-by-side bent over the body of Skyglo as they feed from her breasts.

Then the dark figure is so close to me that the wind from the words that he silently speaks into my face ruffles the fur of my mane and I can smell a scent that is pleasing to me and gives my belly a feeling of hunger.

The dream-pictures stop for that is surely when I awakened and so I look up seeking comfort from the pale blue disc of the Moon which is not hidden by a

covering of clouds and which I see has passed the high point in its journey across the darkened Sky.

I have to swallow because there is water in my mouth and I feel my belly is truly aching painfully even more so than my tail despite it being a different feeling of hurt.

I close my eyes to order the chatter in my head and I determine that a scent which I can not name is reaching my nostrils and it is coming from beyond the edge of the Raft just as the long silent wind does from the direction of the Craft.

I gaze across to where the pale blue light from the Moon is shining up from the waters of the mighty Ocean far below and a feeling of harmony seems to fill me.

But suddenly I then see in the very far distance a small bright sparkle of yellow light and it shows me just how much the Craft has drifted nearer to us because the light is shining from the back edge of it and it lights up what could be the flattened level surface of another Raft.

My belly tightens as the chatter in my head suddenly recalls what Skyglo spoke of as a journey of great importance upon that which is named the Craft and it being a true journey that travels across the waters of the one mighty Ocean where Others seek a promised destination.

I swallow hard as I question if there truly are Others upon this Craft and my head becomes light as I then question if these Others have perhaps been sent to seek out the troupe and to speak of what the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors have truly keep hidden from us for all of the very many cycles of darkness and light that have long since passed.

Then the scent that is reaching my nostrils is suddenly powerful and it almost overwhelms me with both a rush of water to my mouth and an even more painful ache in my belly and despite that I have not smelt anything like this before I somehow determine that I should greet it with joy.

I stand up with great care and I look with very open eyes to see across the gently rippling surface of the mighty Ocean's moving waters that stretch between the Raft and the distant drifting Craft and I start to grin with joy as I try to picture how my fellow monkeys and I are truly not the only ones in Creation after all and how a different and better wisdom could surely be so near to finding us.

But then the chatter in my head questions how the troupe can possibly learn from these Others upon their Craft because as the waters of the mighty Ocean

spill away to leave the Raft so set apart above their journey they also carry the Craft from one far horizon to another so that it will pass by the Raft and the Dry-Creation beneath it at very great distance.

My grin becomes a scowl as I determine that the Craft will surely soon be lost to us and because I am distracted by the ache that continues in my belly I find myself looking away without joy and down at the yellow bananas in their beds next to the place of Separation and I question how it is that the scent that is reaching my nostrils gives me a hunger and yet my desire is not to feed on what the Spirit of the Raft provides for the troupe as its nourishment.

Puzzled and restless I settle back down again and I close my eyes without hope that I will soon again sleep but then I find that I am waking up from the darkness that did quickly overwhelm me and I see that the Moon is near to the far horizon where its journey across the darkened Sky will soon end and its pale blue light is sparkling and glinting from the disturbance in the surface waters of the mighty Ocean to the side of the Raft.

I see a great expanse of turbulence creating a vast area covered with large waves and long flowing ripples that can only be a companion wake but what unseen thing is making it happen I can not determine.

I feel very awake now with the chatter that has no dream-pictures to recall quickly returned to my head and as the approach of the Sun to the far horizon behind me is starting to brighten the Sky there I stand up and I look out to where the Craft has not been slow in drifting forward while I slept.

It is easy and yet saddening to determine that the Craft will soon reach the place in its journey where it will come to be as close to the Raft as it will get before it passes us by and because it is now so much closer than before it is also easy to see that the huge flattened bulk of the Craft seems to be a twin of how the Raft surely looked before the Dry-Creation was revealed beneath it.

My eyes quickly see more clearly into the gloom and I start to search for the beds of yellow bananas that must surely cover the surface of the Craft if there truly are Others traveling upon it but the light from the Moon is shining from low down in the Sky beyond the Craft and it shows me nothing but very many dark shadows of differing sizes across the Craft's surface which the chatter in my head tells me are surely cast by the various shapes of very many breaches.

Near to the back of the Craft I can also see that there is a large pale light that glows red like the Sky above the far horizon behind me and just as I puzzle over what I am witnessing I suddenly determine that around the large pale light some

of the dark shadows are moving.

I stare in awe and then slowly I again start to grin with joy.

An excitement and a fear both grow inside me and as they do I shake and my belly tightens greatly but I remain calm despite a great worthiness that then comes upon me and I do not need to tell myself what I have already determined that I am looking at.

The moving shadows are truly tall dark figures walking about on long thin legs and they are surely those who Skyglo did name as the Others.

I soon determine that there are many of these tall figures all across the surface of the Craft but most of them do not move because they seem to be lying down as if sleeping amongst the larger dark shadows that are cast by the numberless breaches.

Without moving I stand in silence and I marvel at everything that is happening in Creation around me with the Moon now touching the far horizon beyond while the Sky becomes ever brighter behind me even as the Craft with its troupe of Others upon it drifts quickly onward.

To the side of the Raft the disturbance in the surface waters of the mighty Ocean flashes both red and blue but still my eyes are not distracted from the incredible sight of the figures moving about on the surface of the Craft even as they soon must drift past the Raft as they travel on towards the far horizon ahead of them.

The chatter in my head is now slow and hushed but I hear it telling me that the waves of the disturbance can only be directly ahead of the Craft and in the way of its journey and I do not have to wait long before I can see that surely the Others must pass over these turbulent waves on their way ahead.

But what happens next truly surprises and awes me.

The Craft drifts onto the place where the disturbance in the surface waters of the mighty Ocean seems to be waiting for it and without any delay the Craft not only covers the turbulent waves as if suppressing their agitation but it becomes completely surrounded all about by what looks like a companion wake.

And then the Craft stops moving.

I can only marvel at this unexpected sight until I slowly start to question if I am truly witnessing what is happening rather than seeing it as a dream-picture.

But the Craft stays where it is with a companion wake surrounding it as the waters of the mighty Ocean try to carry its massive bulk forwards.

There is a thumping in my chest that goes on and on while the chatter in my

head tries again and again to determine if I am truly awake or asleep and the pale blue disc of the Moon seems to be very far away as it slowly and in silence sinks behind the far horizon in front of me.

Then the first light from the Sun shines on my back and as I feel its early warmth a long dark shadow stretches out from the Dry-Creation beneath the Raft and it reaches across the waters of the mighty Ocean to cover the Craft and with it the Others upon its surface.

## 4. 18

The news of our new neighbours is surely told quickly across the Raft as the troupe awakens with the coming of the cycle of light and my fellows are not slow in gathering at the edge of the Raft so they too can gaze down passed the slope of Dry-Creation below and out across the expanse of mighty Ocean beyond it to where the Craft has come to rest in its chosen place.

I still have not moved as I stand alone with the long silent wind pushing gently into my face and the feeling of worthiness that fills me is like nothing I have felt before now and I determine that I am surely apart from the pain in my tail and the warmth on my back.

The proud and joyous chatter in my head tells me again and again that I was alone in attending what was truly the greatest sight that any monkey of the troupe could have been favoured to witness surely since the ancestors found themselves safe while around them all of Creation was being drowned and those that were bad in His sight were being washed away.

And surely now I share the same feeling of awe that they must have enjoyed when they truly believed that they were His chosen ones even as they were set upon the Raft where they watched the Cloud-rain fall down upon the Homeland of Dry-Creation until there was nothing left to see but a mighty Ocean without limits.

Through my feet it is as if I can touch the very presence of the Spirit of the Raft and with my body filled with the joy that it gives me I silently pray that She guides me about the mystery of our new neighbours and about what powerful force must have summoned them to such a destination.

The dark-shadow cast by the massive base of Dry-Creation below the Raft is steadily shrinking as the Sun journeys up from the far horizon behind me and by staring into the lessening gloom I can easily see the Craft with its streaming companion wake and I start to picture it as travelling back to the same far



horizon from where it has so soon since journeyed.

I see also the very many tall dark figures that move about on its flattened surface as they walk between the numberless breaches to gather at the nearest side of the Craft along an edge that seems to be torn and damaged even as it seems also to grow taller out of the turbulent waters along its vast length.

Suddenly it is as if I have become like a Spirit of the Sky that is far above Creation and I am looking down on to a troupe of foolish monkeys upon a Raft and I picture myself laughing as I call down to these small isolated figures that they are my chosen ones and that they must not question that they journey to a promised destination beyond the far horizon.

And as the dark-shadow passes from the Craft I start to see that beneath its turbulent companion wake there is a shoulder of what can only be Dry-Creation which is almost hidden beneath the waters of the mighty Ocean as they continue to rush passed and by looking along the length of this shoulder I can surely see at its outer edge a slope disappearing down into the depths where the cold and hungry sharks have their domain.

I can not help but grin as the chatter in my head then tells me that another huge raised and solid place of Dry-Creation will soon appear beneath the Craft and that it will surely look the same as that being revealed beneath the Raft even if it is the smaller of the two.

“Wise Tomas. The drifting Craft denies the waters of the mighty Ocean its power to make further its journey...” Calls out Lord Simolas as he approaches the place of Separation.

“...can your wisdom guide us to the purpose of this mystery for to you it seems to bring joy?”

At last I take my eyes from the view ahead of me and I turn to see that Lord Simolas has with him Gordan and not far behind them on the same pathway is Simolan together with Skyglo and also Novice Tofas.

Lord Simolas is clearly awed and humbled by the view from the side of the Raft.

“Lord Simolas...” I reply suppressing my grin despite that my head is filling with worthy chatter about the purpose of what I am witnessing.

“...it is my belief that Creation is birthing for us new places from the waters of the mighty Ocean. Places solid and dry. The first is here for us to see already.” And I point down to the shoulder and the slope of rough grey fabric below us.

“And this is surely why we have witnessed such disorder...” I then add as I determine more of what the chatter in my head is telling me.

“...because Creation has suffered as do our mated females when they have the birthing sickness that replaces the cycles of their seed-blood. Creation has had that sickness too because it has been preparing to birth this pair of new places.” And as I point across to our new neighbours I see that Lord Simolas is already staring out across the Dry-Creation below us to the Craft in the distance and he displays no sign that he has heard me.

“It is the other place that is now being birthed that holds onto the Craft...” I then say.

“... see how it will emerge from the waters of the mighty Ocean when they spill away enough to leave dry the base of the Craft.”

There is a long silent pause as they all search the confusion of water around the base of the Craft until at last each of them see the shoulder of Dry-Creation that will soon to be uncovered. Then Lord Simolas replies.

“Wise Tomas...” He says without looking at me.

“...this is surely part of His great purpose...that we have been given this place...and these Others...they have been chosen for that place...over there.”

And recalling what Skyglo did speak of before about our new neighbours I say.

“Lord Simolas. We can only question that they have travelled from beyond the far horizon and they have now arrived at their promised destination where their journey of great importance is at an end.”

There is another long silent pause before Gordan then says.

“Wise Tomas. Creation has surely suffered much in preparing for the birthing of these new places. Also the troupe has suffered much to witness the many of our fellows that have been Silenced by the great disorder of the birthing sickness. Is it now that all danger to the troupe is ended?”

“It is beyond our wisdom Gordan - son of Gordak.” I say as I picture the troupe surely being tested again.

“Wise Tomas...” Novice Tofas then says with such a quiet voice that it seems he speaks only to himself.

“...I am afraid...” Then he adds.

“...there is a story that was told by those on the Raft before us when their faith in the words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors was unquestioned and it told of the birthing of twins that would bring ill fortune and deception together

with false Omens.” But Skyglo speaks up before I can answer.

“This new birthing in its turn will surely reveal a place that is the new home of the Craft and it will surely be the twin of the place that is being birthed beneath our own precious Raft. It is to the Others upon the Craft that we must look for the danger that threatens us.”

“Skyglo - daughter of Sunaglo...” Says Gordan turning to face her.

“...why do you speak of danger? For are we not looking upon our fellows. Fellows of the troupe...His chosen ones that were...somehow...lost and...are now somehow found?” His voice sounds puzzled and angry.

Simolan reaches out to appease him and he says.

“Gordan - son of Gordak. Look again with very open eyes to our new neighbours upon their Craft.”

And so Gordan turns back to look out across the wide gap that separates the troupe from the Others. Then Simolan adds.

“What is it that you truly witness?”

Gordan remains quiet as he gazes across at the forms of the Others that are gathered along the edge of their Craft and who stare back at us with their hands raised to their black faces to shield the light from their eyes as the Sun rises higher in the Sky.

“They see us and they natter about us...” He says with a voice that he tries to keep calm.

“...but they are not like us are they? What in the name of the Spirits are they if not our fellows?” And he looks away from them to show us the frightened look on his face.

It is Skyglo that answers.

“Tell him Wise Tomas...” She says firmly as she turns towards me.

“...tell him about the Kin of the Black Tribe.”

I am completely shocked by what she says because her words bring the pictures to my head of the Raft when I first awoke to see the Moon travelling the darkened Sky as my fellows were sleeping all those very many cycles of darkness and light long since passed before I was yet apprenticed to Wise Loomis as his Novice.

And I recall how I was afraid when a dark figure then walked silently towards me from the pale blue gloom before it stopped to speak to me a prophesy about the destiny of the troupe.

The same dark figure which I believed was a Spirit that was not named by the

words of the Troupe-Lore of the ancestors and which I later determined was the dark shadow of my father recalled from a dream-picture.

The confusion of chatter in my head is quickly too distracting to allow a reply from me and so I just stare back at Skyglo.

She returns my silent stare with a scowl as I then frantically question how she can speak of the Kin of the Black Tribe because even Wise Loomis did not hear of them from me.

My mouth opens but no sound comes out and I suddenly feel as if I am being gamed with because I determine that when the Spirit of the Raft first tried to guide me with Her dream-pictures of the dark figure and through it She spoke of the Kin of the Black Tribe it was even before the coming of the New-Ways when Skyglo's father was still not yet grown as Skyglo is now.

I want to demand how she has learned these words but because my mouth remains silent Skyglo gently shakes her head and says.

"Wise Tomas..." And her eyes seem to display how puzzled she is by my silence.

"...truly you must recall the dark Spirit that names itself the guide to the Kin of the Black Tribe...?" And like a blow to my belly I feel a sudden sharp pain as I determine that Skyglo has surely used her gift to witness the pictures and also to determine the unspoken words from the chatter my head.

"...for it has also spoken to me just as it has spoken to you." She then adds with a frown creasing her brow.

At last I can look away from her and without purpose my gaze finds the Craft and the very many dark figures upon it even as I question if she is still using her gift to expose me.

"I am the Spirit that the Kin of Black Tribe call upon for guidance..." I then hear Skyglo say with great determination as if speaking the recall of these words is not easy for her.

"...and I have come to seek one among you that will hear the prophesy that tells of the destiny that awaits you all when the great changes come and your fate is enjoined with those that I seek to protect."

Lord Simotan and Simolas are both staring at Skyglo while Novice Tofas and Gordan are staring at me.

We are all silent and still except for Skyglo who continues to speak.

"Wise Tomas. They have found us. The Kin of the Black Tribe have brought their greater wisdom and they seek the rewards of the final home that we would

share with them.”

The words of prophesy spoken to me by the dark Spirit that Wise Loomis called a falsity and which for all the very many cycles of darkness and light since then I believed were the guidance of the Spirit of the Raft quickly return to my head.

“But Wise Tomas...” Skyglo then says with a voice that starts to shake.

“...I see that they have become lost to the wisdom of the Spirit that guided them. That guided you and I...”

With all of my flesh now feeling very cold and with the chatter in my head feeling strange and distant I continue to look across at the distant Craft below where I see so very many of the Others now gathered along the nearest edge.

“...and so our destiny is lost too Wise Tomas.

There is another silent pause before Gordan speaks up.

“Wise Tomas. Why does she say our destiny is lost?”

“Skyglo - daughter of Sunaglo...” I say slowly as I try to gain some control of the chatter in my head.

“...are you truly this lost from yourself...? “ I am still so very afraid of the threat that she is to me because surely she can truly reveal how I have greatly deceived the troupe.

“...this is nothing but Heresy that you speak.” I add with as much dignity as I can display.

But she will not be made afraid and with water in her eyes she calls out.

“NO! Wise Tomas no. We must together determine our purpose. We all have so much that will be lost to us.”

Simolan scowls at me and Novice Tofas steps forward to stand between us.

“Speak Skyglo - daughter of Sunaglo.” Commands Lord Simolas.

Skyglo has her tail up and her hands are as fists by her sides as she pleads with me.

“Wise Tomas. The dark Spirit came to me after you denied it...” And then she lowers her eyes to show that she does not want to disrespect me when she adds.

“...because you chose only to hear the Spirit of the Raft.” She pauses to swallow a sob that threatens to stop her but she continues.

“And so the dark Spirit could only search the troupe again and again until it found another with powers that are greater than their fellows that it could speak to. And it was as the Moon travelled the darkened Sky that it found me.”

I determine that Skyglo is speaking truly and yet her words seem not to find a

home in me.

She steps forward so that she is closer and she says quietly.

“Wise Tomas. The Spirit that the Kin of Black Tribe call upon for guidance found you but you were not ready to hear its words...” And she gazes at me with a look of kindness in her eyes as she then says.

“...for it needed to prepare the troupe for when those that it cares for arrived here to its promised destination. The Spirit was afraid that the Raft would not endure just as it was afraid that the Craft would not endure.”

As water runs down from Skyglo’s eyes I glance up to see that Lord Simolas and the others behind her are also listening with great purpose.

“Wise Tomas...” She says with difficulty.

“...the troupe was always destined to join with the Kin of the Black Tribe and then to share with them the gifts of bountiful nourishment and the space to birth its many new young ones. The troupe and the Black Tribe were to discover together our final home...which is there...” And Skyglo points a finger down to the waters of the mighty Ocean that separates the two new places being birthed.

“...down beyond the surface waters which will soon no longer hide any secrets from us.” Then she swallows hard before adding.

“But now the wisdom of the dark Spirit will not save us.”

My belly is aching more painfully now than my tail has ever done because the chatter in my head tells me that if Skyglo truly does speak the wisest of words then I have been somehow deceived and the Spirit of the Raft Herself has been a falsity.

“But the Raft was healed when its Spirit was awakened before the coming of the New-Ways...” I say in a voice that sounds too loud.

“...and the breaches were taking from us the yellow bananas...” But no more words will come from me as I look down at the Craft because I see again how the surface of it is pitted and scarred with its numberless breaches and now also with the light from the Sun shining on it that there are no beds of yellow bananas to be seen.

“Wise Tomas. In the name of the Spirit of the Raft the troupe was truly dutiful and we endured...” Replies Skyglo quietly.

“...but the Kin of the Black Tribe upon their Craft had not the same guidance and they had not a wise and respected Spirit-Guide to command them as Her obedient servant. And because they also listened not to the Spirit that they called upon for guidance their nourishment has long since before now perished. They

are truly lost from themselves.” Skyglo can only just control her voice when she then adds.

“They have since learned from the cold and hungry sharks...that feeding on flesh will sustain them.”

“She speaks the truth...” Says Novice Tofas clearly.

“...or my own eyes deceive me.” And he points a finger at the distant Craft.

We all stare with very open eyes and in an awed silence until Lord Simolas gasps and says.

“No. That is surely not what they do”. And because my head is already so full of confused chatter I struggle to search the home of our new neighbours to find what has so shocked Lord Simolas.

Despite that the Craft is just more than half the size of the Raft and even as there surely are fewer members of the Black Tribe than there are members of the troupe its Kin seem to be much crowded together just as most of them gather at the side of the Craft to stare up at us.

As I continue to search I see that despite the numberless breaches there are surely many interconnecting narrow ways that cross the expanse of the Craft’s surface and I determine that these are what remain of the paths that ran between the beds of yellow bananas that Skyglo spoke of as now perished.

Looking to the back of the Craft I see that a long white Cloud has formed and it is rising up from a bright yellow dancing light around which a large group of the Tribe has gathered as they feed from some food that I have not before seen.

I try to determine how our new neighbours have upon their Craft a piece of the Sun together with a Cloud that seeks to escape from it and also I am awed that the group gathered can squat so strangely because none of them have tails but then I am distracted as I witness the form of a sleeping adult that does not awaken even as it is lifted by two of its fellows and it is taken across to the yellow dancing light.

The still body is then carefully laid below the white Cloud that is rising upwards just as others of the Black Tribe are carrying what seems to be piles of tangled branches in their arms which they throw on top of the small bright Sun.

Then I surely see Silent bodies that are lying at the back edge of the Craft near to where the tangled branches are being pulled away from its surface fabric to be carried away.

Looking again at the gathering around the yellow dancing light I then at last determine what it is that they are doing.

They are taking flesh from parts of a body before them which they put to their mouths and so feed themselves.

Even as the same strange but welcome scent reaches me just as it did when the last cycle of darkness was upon the Raft it again brings water to my mouth.

The chatter in my head then denies me any answers to the difficult questions that I start to ask myself about what it is that I am witnessing and when my belly heaves and my legs are suddenly very weak I can not help but determine the purpose of the words spoken by Skyglo.

I have to look away just as Gordan has done but Novice Tofas and Lord Simolas continue to silently stare even as I see that their nostrils twitch and their muzzles tighten.

I begin speaking with Skyglo but the sound of my voice is strange and not at all like my own.

“Skyglo - daughter of Sunaglo. You have been told of this?” I ask.

Skyglo has her face pressed against the fur that covers Simolan’s chest and between her sobs she says.

“They have found us...and now they will not share with us the Homeland of Dry-Creation...which was to be the inheritance of us all...”

I close my eyes as a strange feeling of worthiness starts to fill both my head and my body but it brings no joy with it and I just want to reach deep within myself so that I may grasp with my own hands the pictures that I now have determined and then pull them out so that I never have to recall again what they show me.

The thumping in my chest is strong and the sickness in my belly is painful and as water continues to fill my mouth my lustful desires become aroused and I question if I can truly now taste the scent that gets stronger from across the waters of the mighty Ocean.

Skyglo’s voice reaches my ears but it seems to be from very far away.

“...and they will never return to their old ways even as we are not strong enough to resist their Heresy of Greed.”

“There is more...”. But Skyglo does not finish.

In the darkness that I crave to be my protection I hear a voice say.

“We are the sacrifice that was ordered from the start”. But I do not determine from where the words are spoken.

“No. No. NO!” These words are surely from my own mouth.

“It is all false. All. Deception and more deception”. I hear myself add as



something deep within chills me like worthiness being utterly taken away.

I open my eyes and I am looking along one of the pathways that leads away from the place of Separation to where Brandas - son of Brandak - is holding back a large gathering of my fellows who stare curiously and fearfully towards Lord Simotan and myself.

I want the crowding of pictures that jostle in my head like a restless mob to stop and the pain and confusion that they bring with them to end without delay and I suddenly have only one desire and that is to find a place where I can be alone.

Without any polite words I stumble forwards along the pathway and I ignore the distant anxious call from Novice Tofas at my back as I hurry through the gap that appears in the gathering before me and once away from my many fellows I continue on with no other purpose than escape.

I walk along pathway after pathway until slowly an order starts to return to the chatter in my head but it does not lessen the fear that grips at my belly and it does not determine why the scent that has been reaching my nostrils is changing and also getting stronger.

The water has gone from my mouth and I no longer feel aroused by the smell and rather than it giving me hunger it makes me scowl so that I want to quickly get away from it but the scent becomes even more powerful as I follow a pathway along the back of the Raft and I determine that I will find where it is coming from and so distract myself from the pictures of the Kin of the Black Tribe performing their dreadful duties that surely refuse to leave my head.

I find myself passing by the places along the back edge of the Raft where the members of the troupe rid themselves of their waste and my fellows that I see gathered at each of them are very anxious and fearful when they see me approaching and I choose to ignore any greetings that they give me.

And so I walk on until the smell becomes ever more difficult to endure and I have to stop so that I can look over the edge of the Raft and down onto the shoulder of Dry-Creation below me.

I see that there is much brown waste piled up along its length which I determine will surely be washed away when the waters of the Cloud-rain come and with it too the smell but then I turn towards the place of rituals and I question if an even stronger and more repulsive scent is coming from there.

I walk on and indeed the bad smell becomes more powerful even until I reach the place of rituals itself where the smell is terrible indeed and I again look

down from the edge of the Raft.

Below me is the disordered pile of cold flesh where the Raft was rid of our many fellows at the end of the last ceremony for the Silenced and their seemingly sleeping forms brings me a recall of our new neighbours on the Craft and the bodies at the back of their Craft waiting to be eaten.

My belly heaves and my head starts to feel cold and light but I can not stop myself from staring down at the bodies which look small and damaged like those of twisted and broken infants and on top of the pile is a fellow that I can not name whose eyes and mouth are open wide as if they are staring back at me and grinning at my discomfort.

Then the foulness of the smell makes my belly heave again and a sudden unsteadiness overwhelms me.

I try to step back and away from the edge but I am overcome by weakness and when I put my foot where there is no Raft I find myself falling.

The mocking grin of my fellow below has summoned me downwards and as I leave behind the safety of the Raft I can only offer up a brief prayer before I yield to the darkness that takes away the chatter in my head.

## 4. 19

I am in the jaws of a cold and hungry shark and the Raft is nowhere to be seen.

I struggle to keep the huge white teeth from biting into me but I am very weak and my efforts will surely fail.

My tail has already been taken and I can only feel a great pain from where it was bitten off and then I determine that I truly can not move at all.

I want to move.

I try to move but I can not.

My eyes are closed.

The teeth of the cold and hungry shark crush down on my chest and I feel myself burst open so that a foul smell rushes out to fill my nostrils and to fill my head and then also surely to fill all of the darkness that surrounds me.

“Tomas...my precious Tomas...” It is the Spirit of the Raft at last and She is calling out my name.

I open my eyes but it is Dolfis who is whispering in my ear and she has Brandip mounted upon her as they mate silently.

“I saw you fall from the Raft...” I say to Brandip.

“...and now the cold and hungry sharks feed on me.”

Then Wise Loomis and Lord Simotan are there and they too are watching Brandip mate with Dolfis.

“You wasted your terrible powers Tomas - son of Tomak...” They say together.

“...for now the Kin of the Black Tribe have found you and they will nourish themselves with what the cold and hungry shark will leave of your flesh.”

“Am I truly Silenced?” I ask and my voice is a dry and cracked whisper.

I can not see the pale disc of the Moon in the darkened Sky above me but very slowly the chatter in my head tells me that I am surely waking up after a

long sleep and the cycle of darkness is covering Creation.

I try to determine why I can only move my head and not any part of my body.

And then despite the gloom that surrounds me I see that I have the cold flesh of a Silenced member of the troupe pressing down from on top of me and I determine that I am facing upwards as I lie on the pile of bodies that I have fallen onto.

I remain still as I listen to the thumping in my chest but soon the great pains that I can feel in my back and at the base of my tail are too distracting and I slowly start the struggle to move the weight that is on top of me.

The effort is mighty and darkness takes me often.

Then at last my chest is released and with my breathing easier comes great pain.

I am in a place that surely has no name but with so much effort and hurt I slowly roll myself down and then off the pile of stinking flesh that is under me.

The rough grey surface of the shoulder of Dry-Creation that I come to lie on is cold and hard but I rest there with only the strength to pray for guidance.

My prayer is quickly distracted by the growing excitement that I feel from the touch of something so new and different.

But nothing can stop this little chatter in my head from being taken away by the demand of sleep.

## 4. 20

I awaken again to see that the dark shadow of gloom that covers me is not as it was before.

As the chatter very slowly returns to my head I can only question how far the pale blue disc of the Moon has journeyed in this cycle of darkness because its place in the darkened Sky is still hidden from me by the vast bulk of the Raft that is rising up beside where I am now lying.

High above me the outline of its back edge is black and menacing as it looms against the darkened Sky and as I stare at it I start to see the first faint glow which greets the coming of the cycle of light.

The smell from the bodies beside me and the sight of them in a tangled pile makes my belly heave again and so I crawl away as far as I can manage across the rough hard surface of Dry-Creation beneath my hands and knees.

It is not easy and it is also very painful to move like this and so before I get at all far I stop and I rest before straining hard to stand up so that I can hobble as best as I can on sore legs and tender feet.

It is so very strange not to have a smooth flattened surface to walk on and the rough grey fabric of Dry-Creation beneath my feet hurts me greatly and so I walk slowly and carefully keeping close to the tall vertical back side of the Raft and I struggle to distance myself from the foul smelling bodies of the Silenced.

Down here at the base of the Raft there are many branches of its fabric that are not so tightly interwoven and not so flattened and they spread out from the Raft's side as they seemingly grow down and into the Dry-Creation upon which it rests and so I have something to grip onto as I cautiously step forward.

I do not determine how very afraid I am by being away from my only precious home because the smell reaching my nostrils is so very overwhelming that the chatter in my head tells me nothing but that I must keep moving.

The Sky has become brighter when I reach a place where much brown waste

and very many skins of yellow bananas are spread out in front of me and I determine that I am now below one of the places at the back of the Raft where the members of the troupe go to rid themselves of their waste.

Apart from the piles that have recently been rid from the back of the Raft the mess covers much of the shoulder of Dry-Creation even to its edge where it spills over and surely down the slope where the waters of the Cloud-rain has tried to wash it away.

The scent here is bad but not as foul as the smell beneath the place of rituals and because my fur is already covered with much filth I determine that stepping through this waste will not make it worse and so I stumble onwards with the hope that I will not be overcome by the growing sense of panic that has grown very big inside me.

I journey on until at last the chatter in my head tells me to stop so that I can determine why I am hurting so much and if there is something I can do to save myself.

I see that the cycle of light is surely now beginning despite that I remain in a dark shadow and when I look upwards I can see only the vast bulk of the Raft against the pale blue of the Sky because the place at the far horizon where the Sun starts its journey is hidden from me.

Being so close to the base of the Raft that itself has been hidden for so very many cycles of darkness and light long since passed humbles me and with a feeling of worthiness that makes my head feel light I determine that again I am honoured to witness what no other monkey of our troupe has before been allowed.

I want to lean on the spreading branches and rest myself against the side of the Raft but the sight of the filth on my fur brings with it a feeling of shame and I choose not to disrespect the precious home of the troupe by touching its base with my dirty body.

Then in the distance ahead of me and high up as if almost touching the Sky I see several of my fellows squatting down along the back edge of the Raft as they rid themselves of their waste.

A great feeling of joy and relief almost completely overwhelms me and I determine that if I call out to them then I will soon have their help to plan my return to the comfort and safety of the surface of the Raft.

I desperately want to make them hear me but I do not have a voice.

My chest is left full of pain with the effort of trying to call out and my throat

is so very dry.

I attempt it again but my voice is nothing but a faint whisper and my head becomes light and my body unsteady.

Despite the growing weakness I determine that I must keep moving because if I can reach the place ahead which is below where my fellows now are they will surely look down and see me.

I want to lick my dry and cracked lips but there is no water on my tongue and so as I carefully step forward I question why I should be so very thirsty and also so very hungry.

I determine that I should not stay so close to the side of the Raft because it will surely be easier for my fellows to see me if I am nearer to the edge of the shoulder where the downward slope begins.

The walk forward and away from the side of the Raft is slow and painful and I carefully look down so that I can keep from hurting my feet on the rough surface with its many breaches and awkward raised places.

The smell of brown waste gets stronger as I get closer to the mess ahead of me and because I am also now not far from the outer edge of the shoulder I stop to rest and to look around me.

From where I now am the huge vertical side of the Raft no longer hides the view across the waters of the mighty Ocean to where the Craft has settled and I have to close my eyes and question what I have just seen before I can open them again and truly determine what I am looking at.

The Craft is still the same distance from the Raft as before and it still has its chosen place the same height below the level of the Raft as before but the waters of the mighty Ocean are so much lower down that the Craft is resting high above them on the flattened top of the solid and dry new place which can now be seen as so incredibly vast.

“It is truly the twin of the Dry-Creation upon which I stand.” I manage to whisper in awe and as I marvel at how I am witnessing something so familiar I determine that the Kin of the Black Tribe must be seeing a similar sight with just the fast flowing waters of the mighty Ocean separating our bigger and taller home from theirs.

“But how can this second birthing be happening so quickly?” I ask myself with a voice so quiet that even I can not hear it and without any hope of an answer I start to walk the short distance to the top of the downward slope at the edge of the shoulder where I pray that my fellows on the surface of the Raft will

see me.

I am careful as I step forward because on looking carefully down the slope stretching away to the waters of the mighty Ocean so far below I can not determine just how far it is and the very great distance frightens and puzzles me.

“Only if I have truly somehow missed the passing of many cycles of both darkness and light can the waters of the mighty Ocean have spilled away so very much.” I tell myself slowly and deliberately and I desperately try to recall anything other than my slow walk to where I now stand since my fall from the back of the Raft.

I can not find an answer to the mystery and I stand with a fearless amazement looking down at the far distant fast moving waters that rush between the two newly birthed slopes that separate the precious home of the troupe from the Kin of the Black tribe upon their Craft.

And then I marvel when I determine that the gap that separates the lower parts of both slopes is surely becoming less wide as the mighty Ocean continues to spill away and I try to picture these twin mountains of the Dry-Creation being joined at their bases and dry.

Then I suddenly feel a pain in my belly and a little water comes to my mouth as a familiar and yet unwanted scent mixes with the smell from the filth on my fur and from the waste near my feet and I shiver in the chill of the dark-shadow cast by the bulk of the Raft as I stare across to where the early light from the Sun finds the Kin of the Black Tribe upon their Craft as they surely go about their dreadful duties again.

The chatter in my head is slow because of the pain and the tiredness that threaten to overwhelm me but I determine that I truly do see that not only are there dark figures moving about on the surface of the Craft but there are also dark figures walking along the shoulder of Dry-Creation below it.

Then my head becomes very light and my legs become weakened as the scent from the Craft brings with it a powerful feeling of hunger that I can not deny.

“Tomas - son of Tomag...” I say to myself as loudly as I can manage.

“...the Kin of the Black Tribe must be resisted.”

But then I hear other voices that seem to reach my ears from very far away and I am afraid that somehow those upon the Craft are calling to me.

“Who walks there?” I hear faintly from above me and I suddenly recall that my fellows of the troupe must surely now be able to see me if they are standing at the edge of the Raft.



I turn and I look up.

The side of the Raft looms high before me and at its top I see a line of my fellows staring down at me with faces that display a terror at what they are seeing.

I want to grin and call out a greeting to them but I am helpless to resist the darkness that overwhelms me.

## 4. 21

I am surrounded by many Kin of the Dark Tribe and they are biting into my fur with their small mouths and their smooth black faces shine red with my blood.

They bite at my arms and at my legs.

They bite at my tail and my chest and they even bite at the back of my head.

I can not see them in the darkness but I try to fight them off despite there being so very many of them.

Then my eyes are open and I am looking up at the Sun that has not yet reached the mid point in its journey across the clear blue Sky.

The chatter so very slowly begins to return to my head and at last I tell myself that I have been sleeping with only dream-pictures to frighten me.

But the pains that I now feel from every part of my body hurt so very much and I am afraid that the back of my head is truly broken.

I am lying on my side looking back up the slope down which I have surely tumbled and when I slowly turn my head I see that behind me is an upstanding lip of solid fabric that surrounds a huge breach that is much wider than I am tall.

I carefully touch the back of my head and I feel the blood that has not only wetted my fur but has also marked the raised part of the slope that I have come to rest against.

I feel tired as well as hurt and confused.

There is a lot of the slope that I can see above me and I determine that I have surely fallen a great distance down from the Raft but because I am afraid of how much further still I can fall before I reach the the waters of the mighty Ocean below I chose not to look down the slope and I lie still.

I lie still and I close my eyes.

After a long pause while I determine that I am truly alone with my troubles and with the Sun approaching its high point in the Sky I slowly start to move

my arms and my legs until I am ready to raise myself up a little but I keep hold of the lip around the breach so that I have something to rest against.

Then I see that the breach is a Pool of Hurt where some Cloud-rain still remains and so with great care I ease my face down and I drink greedily at the shallow pool of clear water and when my throat feels better and my thirst is eased I use my hand to wash the blood from my head and my face which cheers me a little.

I squat against the lip of the breach so that I can look back up the slope again and despite the long way that it surely is to the safety of the Raft I make the great effort to stand up on my bruised and cut legs so that I can attempt the journey.

But I truly do not have the strength and I determine that I must stay where I am until I have rested some more.

I gently rub at the base of my tail and with sore eyes I look out and across the gap between the two twins of Dry-Creation to see that I am now about the same height above the waters of the mighty Ocean as is the Craft.

Then I look down to the bottom of the slope below the Craft where it disappears down beneath the furious turmoil of passing waters and I see that there are some curious shapes emerging which I have never seen before and so I can not name them.

Each shape seems to have many large branches that do not interweave or tangle but instead they spread out from a single larger vertical branch and there are many of these shapes emerging all along the length of the slope.

Then when I look down the slope that I am squatting on I see that similar shapes are emerging there too in a line at the edge of the waters of the mighty Ocean far below me.

I am too weak to question what I am looking at and instead I close my eyes.

When I open them again the dark shadow of the Cloud-shade is covering all of Creation and the falling of the Cloud-rain has surely awakened me from sleeping.

The waters of the Cloud-rain fall with heavy drops onto my head and onto my shoulders and they are soon splashing very much harder and very noisily onto everything that I can see around me.

My fur quickly becomes very wet and I enjoy watching the remaining filth and blood wash out of it but as the waters of the Cloud-rain fall ever more harder and as they start to flood down from the slope above me my fur becomes

very heavy and the leathery skin on the bottom of my feet is no longer able to grip onto the rough grey fabric beneath them and despite the lip of the breach I can not stop myself from slipping downwards.

My descent is slow and gradual because I grasp at the slope's rough grey surface fabric as much as I can but I am tired and wet and I can not keep a firm enough grip on anything and as the Cloud-rain continues to fall I slide further and further down the slope until I arrive at a place where the waters of the mighty Ocean rush noisily passed just below me.

I have come to rest against the single large vertical branch of one of the shapes that has emerged from the fast moving waters and which is sprouting out of the fabric of the slope and I give thanks for it being there to stop me from being washed away.

The base of the vertical branch is too big for me to put my arms all the way around it but I grip tightly onto its rough green surface as I look up its length to see the many other branches that spread out from it some distance above my head.

There are very many of these branching shapes all along the slope and more are slowly emerging from the mighty Ocean that continues to spill away and the spreading branches from each touch those of its neighbours so that it seems they are all connected.

I feel safe squatting against the base of this hard vertical branch and so as the waters of the Cloud-rain continue to fall from above and also to flood down from slope I rest and I wait and I pray that the fabric of the slope beneath my feet will not remain so slippery when dark-shadow of the Cloud shade passes away from Creation.

The Cloud-rain is cool and soothing and I am saddened when it stops in its turn but water continues to drip down from the spreading branches above as I determine that I will wait patiently for the warmth of the Sun to return and for the slope to dry before I let go of the branch I am holding onto so that I can groom my fur.

Despite that I am much distracted by my hunger and by the wounds that I have I am much comforted by the shining of the Sun and I feel excited about all the marvelous new branching shapes that cast strange and beautiful interwoven dark shadows upon the slope around me even as I dry myself.

I am also comforted by the sound of the waters of the mighty Ocean rushing passed me through the narrowing gap between the slopes on either side of it

because its constant loud noise somehow stops the chatter in my head from becoming confused with panic.

I determine that from here the safety and the comfort of the Raft will not be easily achieved and so I clench my teeth as I try to ignore the many pains that I feel all over my body when I slowly stand up to begin my journey back up the slope which is no longer wet and slippery.

I use my hands and my feet so that my face remains close to the rough grey fabric of the slope and when my body hurts so much that I have to stop I carefully turn around and I squat down to rest.

I see that I have climbed high enough so that I can look over the tall branching shapes below me and across to the slope beneath the Craft and despite my tiredness I grin at the sight of the very many tiny points of light as the Sun shines its light on the numberless Pools of Hurt that have surely formed after the falling of the Cloud-rain.

But I tell myself that I must keep moving and as I do I suddenly see a movement amongst the lights on the far slope and about half way between the Craft and the very many branching shapes that have emerged at the bottom of the slope I see a loose gathering of many dark figures that are surely Kin of the Black Tribe that are carefully stepping downwards.

My belly tightens as my hands start to shake and I am so afraid that I will tumble downwards that I quickly start climbing again and I do not get far before I determine that something in Creation is truly changing and so I stop and I carefully look around me.

The entire surface of the mighty Ocean as far as I can see and in every direction has become strangely restless and as I wait and I watch I see spreading branches starting to emerge and they bend and sway as the passing waters try to carry them away.

The chatter in my head then tells me that it is the noise of the mighty Ocean that I have heard changing and surely there is a great struggle indeed as the spreading branches that are emerging everywhere try to hold back the movement of the departing waters.

The sight is truly awesome and I find myself unable to move as I watch and I question if there truly is a great and wise God that orders this change or perhaps some mighty controlling Spirits.

Then the chatter in my head questions if perhaps it is the powerful force that continues to threaten Creation with disorder and I find myself praying that soon

I will awaken to determine that all of the things that I can now see and hear are just dream-pictures as I sleep in my chosen place upon the Raft.

I find myself getting to my feet and then standing upright with a fragile grip on the slope beneath my feet and without a planned purpose I spread my arms as if to embrace all things around me.

“Please awaken me or give me the strength to achieve my precious home again.” I plead to the Sky above.

Then I am suddenly so very afraid that I am becoming lost from myself and I glance about me in panic until my eyes find again those of the Kin of the Black Tribe that are journeying down the far slope.

They have all stopped moving and they have gathered together to natter and to point at me and to point also at where the Raft surely still rests in its given place at the top of this impossibly high slope.

I question how their thin black bodies can balance without them having tails and I pray that because they are so ugly they will fall and hurt themselves which they truly deserve.

Then I start to sway and all I can picture is my precious son Tofas and my faithful mate Dolfis and the yellow bananas that sprout from the smooth flattened surface of the Raft.

## 4. 22

I am surely lost from myself.

There is only weakness and hurt.

I look through the spreading branches above me and far beyond them is a clear blue Sky and the bright yellow disc of the Sun that will soon become hidden behind the twin of Dry-Creation upon which rests the Craft.

I listen to the chatter in my head but it seems that I can not determine its purpose.

It is surely the end for me and I have nothing but the wait to be Silenced.

My head feels broken and damaged and I lie against the solid form of a vertical branch which is surely surrounded all about by other branching forms.

It is so very quiet because I can no longer hear the noise of the mighty Ocean as its waters spill away.

There is just a quiet lapping sound like the soothing noise of the gentle companion wake at the front of the Raft that my fellows and I would listen to when we sought the yellow bananas with the special quality.

I close my eyes.

When I open them again it is to see the dark shadow cast by the Craft upon its new home is stretched out to cover me and much of the slope that I have again tumbled down.

The far slope below the Craft that I can see through the branches is also covered with dark-shadow and the colour of the Sky tells me that the cycle of light is soon to end.

Without moving and without care I question what summons the Sun to journey to the far horizon and then also what now has summoned the waters of the mighty Ocean to spill away.

The soothing noise continues to comfort me and by turning my stiff and painful neck just a little I can look down between the many vertical branches to

where the base of the slope meets a vast and flattened expanse that was until now always hidden.

As far as I can see across this vast dark and wet flattened expanse there are branching shapes that sprout up everywhere and between them are Pools of Hurt that lap gently as the last of the Mighty Ocean is surely disappearing.

I close my eyes again.

It now seems so easy to picture a vast and mighty Ocean of branching shapes covering all of Creation from far horizon to far horizon and from it two mighty twin mountains of Dry-Creation rising up to face each other.

But what I can not picture or determine is a great and wise God with enough disappointment and anger to feed a wrath big enough for such a precious Homeland of Dry-Creation to be covered over and drowned.



## 4. 23

“No my brother. This one must live.”

“But he looks strong under that fur and it would take the strongest of us to crack his skull.”

“Brothers. Come and see the one we have found. It is he who waved to us from the side of the mountain.”

“Well done. Is he alive?”

“Yes he sleeps. But he would be dead if I had not stopped Caarn from breaking his head.”

“Brother Caarn. Go and tell the others that we have one them and that we all will rest until the daylight comes and he wakes up.”

“Brother Trook. Collect wood and keep the fire burning. There are no trees beyond the start of the long climb up to the top.”

The voices speak as if from far beyond the darkness that overwhelms me and not all of the words find a home within me.

“The night will soon be passed.”

“Chief Mowhuntus. Why must we wait. It is better to climb now while the air is still cool.”

“No brother Joefuss. There is time enough. Go and prepare meat and find water. We do not know what awaits us up there. You two. Carry him down and pray that this one was chosen for us.”

In the darkness I picture the voices spoken by the Kin of Black Tribe but I can not move because my flesh seems separated from the chatter in my head.

“Brother Allam. Take his feet and tread carefully.”

“It is not me that will drop him brother.”

I feel small soft hands grasp me and I am lifted up.

I start to question if this is how my Silencing is to be but the pain of being moved distracts me greatly and the darkness overwhelms me again.

Then there is laughter. Cruel laughter that does not display any true joy.

“He is the bravest of them and I think that he was going to challenge us all after we crossed the forest floor.”

The fur on the side of my face is being warmed and a familiar scent reaches my nostrils but it is so very powerful that my chest thumps and water fills my mouth.

“He carried no food and he has no weapons.”

“But Brother Joefuss. We know that few among them are not foolish and none of them have known fighting.”

“They eat only the yellow fruits and they live in peace. They know only what their ancestors told them and they still worship their one monkey God”.

There is more cruel laughter.

“We will feast well.”

“I have never tasted the yellow fruits that you speak of. But if they are not good I will enjoy the new flesh that awaits us.”

“Be warned Brothers and do not forget. Until we have the female there will be no killing.

“We remember. We will not disobey”

“I hope there are plenty of young females. They will be useful in other ways.”

They laugh together again.

The scent filling my nostrils is bringing me back from the darkness and because of the warmth on my face I determine that the cycle of light is upon Creation.

“Brothers. The old monkey stirs.”

I am swallowing the water that is in my mouth as I slowly open my eyes and I can not determine what I am looking at.

Dark shadows are dancing and yellow light is shifting and shaking.

High above me is darkness that is broken by many interwoven spreading yellow branches and just as I see the pale blue disc of the Moon a white cloud suddenly passes close to my face and it surprises me greatly so that I whimper.

“The smoke from the fire scares him.” And all around me there is more loud laughter.

Then smooth black faces loom over me and I close my eyes because the nearness of their familiar forms frighten me.

“Give him water.”

And because the words spoken at last find a home within me I open my eyes

and I nod my head.

“Chief Mowhuntus. Did you see that. He understood what I said.”

Water is poured into my mouth and as I drink greedily I see that I am surrounded by many vertical branches but I am not on the slope anymore.

The branches around me and the spreading branches above all seem to dance and shimmer with yellow light yet the Sun has truly not started its journey across the Sky.

“Eat this.” Says a voice at my side and when I look at who has spoken to me I see that which has been warming my face.

It is a hot dancing Sun that is so close that I could almost reach out and touch it.

“He prefers the fire to the meat.” The dark figure who has spoken is pointing a small straight branch at me and hanging from the end of it is a piece of flesh which gives off a scent that is overwhelming.

He shakes the stick at me and when I do not move he takes the flesh from it and presses it on to my mouth so that it feels hot.

My mouth opens and he pushes the flesh onto my tongue.

The pleasure of the taste is shocking but very welcome and I can not help but start chewing.

“There is not much more of our meat that we can give you my friend. But soon we will have plenty more.” And again there is much cruel laughter.

They feed me more flesh and they give me water that they carry inside the hollow of large white pointed tooth that can only be from the jaws of a cold and hungry shark.

“I am called Chief Mowhuntus...” Says the tallest of the Others who is now standing before me.

“...do you understand what I say? Do you have a name?”

The chatter in my head is excited but ordered and I feel strength returning to my body and limbs.

I stare up at the smooth hairless body that shines with dancing yellow light and I recall when I first saw the Moon travelling the darkened Sky all the very many cycles of Darkness and light so long since passed and I do not feel afraid any more.

“I spoke with the Spirit that your Black Tribe call upon for guidance for I am Tomas - Son of Tomag.”

Chief Mowhuntus grins and shows me his small white teeth and I can not

help but stare at his wise black face.

“Then it is you that we must thank for keeping safe the food that we shall need...” He says.

“...as we wait for the ancient forest of trees to become bountiful again.”

Around him I see the faces of his fellows who listen too as they nod their heads and grin.

I determine that truly I am touching the very Homeland of Dry-Creation that the ancestors of the troupe would have lived upon and because I am so humbled I can speak only very quietly.

“We were told that those of the troupe were His only chosen ones...” And the Kin of the Black Tribe all stare back at me when I add.

“...but it is the mortal creatures that will be saved.”

“We will spare this one...” Says Chief Mowhuntus turning away from me.

“...this one and the female.”

And as some more hot flesh is pressed to my mouth I determine that I will surely now never see the troupe or the Raft again.

**THE END**

Now that you have read this tale, I would very much appreciate some feedback.

*Please send your comments, good or bad, to:*

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