The wonders of Mazatl

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# about:

This book is written in the first perspective. It consists of many smaller stories were the life of a certain character is explained. The stories don’t take place at same time, but rather at three very different points in history.

Mazatl is a two-dimensional space which has two separate worlds named Cualli and Ichtaca. Cualli can be described as a beautiful and stable world with many types of living beings. Cualli has three main eras named: ‘the Talvi era, the Poisoned age, and the modern day Cualli’. Ichtaca, on the other hand, doesn’t share the same luxury. Ichtaca is what you could call a mirror world. Events that happen in Cualli also have an influence in Ichtaca and also the other way around, but in the end, differ slightly when executed. This slight difference in Ichtaca causes the effect of unsynchronized event also called ‘connection delay’ which sometimes take place when they shouldn’t or don’t take place at all. Connection delay is a serious problem in Ichtaca for the fact that it makes certain areas of the world ‘glitchy’ or incomplete. This lack of world sustainability made the creation of intelligent life impossible. Some ‘creatures’ did manage to survive the randomness of this world. These monsters called Dalkhu’s managed to survive by merging the body and soul with a mystical element named Iggi. Iggi can be described as a weightless matter which has the ability to change into any kind of material desired. You could call Iggi the building blocks of Mazatl. What is unique about iggi is the fact that in extremely large quantities it has the ability to ‘suck’ everything in a specific shape. This property of iggi is the main reason Ichtaca still is intact after Cualli was slowly tearing the world into pieces.

There are four civilizations who inhabit Cualli. The people of Eridu, the Athins, the Akkadians and the Tezcat’s. You will learn more about these civilizations during the story. Cualli also has three major empires and some additional smaller towns. The three empires named: ‘the Akkadian empire, Teneia and Meso’ had inhabitants with a different mindset which caused the three empires to detest one another. The last two empires were formed later in the story as result of these cultural differences.

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# 1: broken promises

I was waiting outside my father’s workshop. There was a small opening in the stone walls which allowed me to see what was going on. My father told me to wait outside because he had ‘important business’ or whatever that has to mean. The curiosity took the best of me, which forced me to peek inside. Although I promised him to stay out of this, I couldn’t resist. A dim light was lit inside the workshop which made it harder for me to see who was inside. After focussing my eyes for while I could finally make up a clear image. Inside I saw the leader of the Tezcat tribe named Eztil sitting on a wooden bench. It was the same bench I made for my father’s birthday. The construction of the bench was rather simple, some wooden cut up tree trunks connected with some holes. These trunks were held up together with some rope. Simple process but good for making sturdy tools and other items. I still remember the happy look on my father’s face when I gave it to him. He said: *“Ohtil your creativity always seems to amaze me.”.* He showed my design to the other tribe members, which also loved it. It didn’t take long until everyone was using my technique to create some simple temporary tools.

Eztil was joined by some of his generals including my sister Nenetl. Nenetl which was seventeen years back then seemed like a good-looking sweetheart on first glance, but truth be told as she had one of the most effective fighting strategies. Using her appeal as a counter weapon. What I mean with this is the fact she wore skimpy clothes which barely covered her fatal areas or chest. She would silently wait for her opponent to take a glance at her which in turn made him lose his focus. This was her opportunity to come forward with a quick blow to the neck of other fatal areas. It didn’t take long before she grew into the ranks of warriors in the Tezcat tribe. This caused her to have a high self-image of herself, thinking she is some kind of female warrior legend. She figured out rather quickly that not every person is deceived this easily and these people had no problem taking her out with a hard blow. I still to this day promised her not to tell my father about these injuries. The reason we had to keep it a secret all dates back on the first major injury she got. A long time earlier there was a dispute between a rival tribe and us about the possession of some hunting grounds. The rival tribe thought it was a good idea to attack us at night. A warrior and a rival of our tribe sliced Nenetl’s back during this conflict with the left side of his spear. Nenetl got lucky he wasn’t able to pierce her in the back, as that would have definitely killed her.

After the fight was over, one of our tribe members brought her back to us. She was covered in blood. Some from others, but most of it from herself. Luckily she was still alive but in critical condition. My father luckily knew a healer not far from our place. He made a quickly engineered carrying device and carried her on his back. He walked for 8 hours that night, but in the end luckily managed to reach the healer in time. A couple of day past and Nenetl returned back to the village in good condition. My dad was furious on Eztil that day for not taking care of his daughter. Eztil kept saying this like: *“Zolin she has great potential, she just got unlucky”* or *“Give her another chance to prove her worth*.”. This was the last drop for my father as he politely asked Eztil to ‘bugger off’. He forbid Nenetl that day to even go outside without his permission. The next day my father called me. He wanted to talk about some runes he found in a temple a while back. He wanted to pass his knowledge on the content on these runes back to me, for as he described ‘just in case someone needs it’. I won’t go into much detail about this conversation. What I can tell however is what my father requested of me near the end of our conversation. In a formal and direct way he said: *“Ohtil can you promise me to always be honest with me and to always protect Nenetl?”* Hesitantly I looked around me, knowing I would never be able to keep this promise for long. My legs were slightly shaking (luckily not noticeable) and my throat felt heavy as I started to stutter: *“I promise dad…”.*

The room went completely silent for a short moment. These couple of second felt like hours, however. I could only hear some background noise like birds chirping and leafs falling. After a while, my father started scratching his beard and said: *“Thank you Ohtil, you can go now”.* I felt like I was hit by a lightning bolt at that moment. Not living up to promises is one of the biggest sins a man could commit in Tezcat norms and values. The whole basis of the ‘Tezcat religion’ was made of four key factors everyone should oblige to. The factors: *“Thou shall not lie”*, *“thou shall not fear an enemy and die trying”, “Thou shall not make false promises”, “thou shall always protect your loved ones”.* These two last factors are the ones that could bring me into a lot of trouble when transgressed. I had to make sure at all cost that this could not happen, as even the lowest punishment would mean death. I’d rather not talk about the higher ones…

I saw my father move his hands fiercely up and down. He started to point at Nenetl with the angriest look on his face I saw so far. I couldn’t make up the entire conversation because my mother was crying in the background. I was only able to hear some small sentences from my father like: “*You’re making a big mistake Nenetl”, “Don’t do this to me, I don’t want you to get hurt”*. Nenetl was completely silenced during the conversation, too stiff and scared to even reply to a simple question. My father yelled at Eztil: *“You fool, HOW can you claim she is ready when she doesn’t have the guts to speak for herself?!”*. Eztil stopped talking for a moment and wiped off my father’s spit on his face. Eztil slowly started to turn his flat hand into a fist and without my father even being able to respond hit him in the face. The force of the impact caused my father to fall back as he stumbled over some tools. His face was covered with small drops of blood. My mother quickly tried to help him up, but he refused her help as he was preparing to strike back. My sister luckily noticed this quickly and stepped in. She helped my father up and pushed Eztil slightly aside. She then faced my father and said with a reassured voice: *“Father I am old enough to make my own decisions. I thought about it for a while and I don’t like living this boring life. I know the dangers of my decision and am willing to take the risk, even if it means the death to me… ”*. My father smirked, wiped off his face and said: *“Over my dead body you are”*. Suddenly I fell off the stone I was standing on. The rain made it very slippery which in turn caused me to skid off. I fell on my back in a pile of mud and struggled to get back up.

The generals quickly went outside to see what was happening. Luckily I was out of the mud puddle before they could get to me. I looked inside the window for a brief moment as heard my mother scream: *“OHTILL!!!”.* After I saw one general I ran like never before. Not looking back just running deep in the woods toward a personal place I used to sit when I needed some time alone. My personal place was near a small lake where I used to catch fish to ease my mind when life was too hard. I went to this place often and most of the time remembered the route in fullest details. But for some odd reason, everything was blurry this time, I thought I was completely lost for a while as the night was nearing. I decided to stop running to decrease the chance of me being actually lost. This was one of the scariest moment in my life. I could hear small predators growl and snarl in bushes far around me. Luckily these sound where too far them to sense me. I cried for a moment because of the desperation and insecurity I was having that moment. I didn’t know what to do now, what would happen next and if I would even be alive tomorrow…

I laid down on the grass and started to breathe slowly to ease my mind. I kept repeating my father’s ‘words of creativity and courage’: “Fear brings forward thought, thoughts create idea’s, ideas are used for plans, plans will save your life…”. I kept repeating the small sentences for a couple of times and started to think of an escape plan. I suddenly remembered a technique my father taught me while ago. He explained to me that there is an underworld beneath us that is almost identical to our own world. He said if I would travel to this underworld I could map landmarks and known places easier, because of the fact that this underworld was less detailed and allowed me to look ‘underneath’ our world to find places. I decided to give it a shot as I sat down and concentrated. I repeated the necessary spells in my head. A fast flashing light appeared above my head, this flashing light then separated into 6 smaller balls of light. The balls of light started to ‘zap’ me with a beam and my body slowly started to dematerialize. I personally didn’t feel a thing during this process. After I while I woke up in a void with allot of colors, the ground was entirely pitch black but surprisingly solid. I could see a vague reflection of the forest underneath the black floor. It was however clear enough for me to distinguish my personal spot from the rest of the forest. I slowly started to walk towards my destination, but could not help to continuously glance at the colorful sky. The world was nothing like my dad described. Although it was uninhabitable at first sight, it did had a special appeal to it. One thing that quite frankly was spooky, was the fact there was no sound. I tried to shout, but I couldn’t even hear myself. It felt like the moment my father asked me the promise but far, far worse…

After a while, I finally was close to my destination, but to my surprise, there was some kind of maze in between. The maze however, was nothing like I ever had seen. It was a three-dimensional maze with parts that were completely upside down. There was a large staircase leading to a small bowl. Below the bowl was an engraved picture of a man lighting the bowl on fire. I waited for a moment as I looked at the surroundings of the maze, trying to figure out an alternate way. I however, was not able to find one. I tried repeating the spell again in my head, but that resulted in putting me back on the staircase. I sat down in despair as I thought I was trapped in this dimension. Some time went by as I sat down silently, not speaking or thinking about anything. I glanced again at the picture underneath the bowl. I vaguely could make up another engraving underneath it. I took a piece of my clothes and wiped off the access materials on it. After some scrubbing, the new image was better visible. The image showed a man entering a portal with an arrow pointing up. I decided to use another spell my father taught me to cast a small fire. With this fire I slowly and carefully started to light the bowl.

I saw some part moving around in a specific path and a small platform was raised below the end of the staircase. The platform led to another bigger platform with a similar bowl but with another color. When I looked closely I could see that every platform and staircase was color coated with a specific bowl color. I walked up to the second bowl and lighted it. The upside down staircase started to move towards me. I had absolutely no idea how to walk ‘up’ this staircase, but like the other bowl, the bowl had some engravings underneath is. This time there was no image displayed but rather a phrase. I was curious what this phrase would do, so repeated is just like the words on my father’s runes. My whole body suddenly started to make a half turn to the left, forcing my legs to be up and my head down. I slowly started to float towards the ceiling. It felt so weird walking on a roof like it was some ordinary floor. I repeated the spell again in my head and everything went back to normal. I now knew what to do. I walked towards the upside down staircase. Repeated the spell and ‘walked up’. I repeated the spell again and landed on a smaller platform just underneath the end of the staircase. This platform led again to nobody’s surprise to another bowl. Before I lighted up the third bowl I first read the spell underneath it. I then proceeded to light the bowl and wait. I saw a big platform come closer, but not that close that I could normally jump on it. I figured this spell would teleport me or something. So without further thoughts, I repeated the spell in my head and got launched towards the sky. Luckily the platform had a roof to stop me from endlessly going towards the sky. But this ‘safety feature’ did however, gave me the worst headache in ages. When I finally landed hard on the platform, I had a huge bump on my forehead. After some time I recovered and stood back on my feet. I ran toward the end of the platform as fast as I could and repeated the spell in my head on the end of the platform. I quickly got launched into the air and made a huge leap towards the new platform. With a rough landing, I managed to get op the last platform. This platform led to the center of the maze which had a very different looking bigger bowl. I figured this one who opens some kind of portal. With praise and relief, I lighted the last bowl, waiting for a portal to appear any moment. Instead of a portal, I got three slaps with a number written on it. There were also three holes where you could insert the slaps. The three slaps also contained a button which I could press. Pressing the button would transport you to one of the three bowls. On the back of each slap was location pointed where you could find another number, ranging from one to three. It seems logical to me that these numbers represent the order you had to insert the slabs. So by finding the slot number of each slab and inserting them into the correct order, a portal, finally emerged. I took no hesitation to go inside the portal and to my relief after while I returned back to my own world. The portal placed me very near to my personal spot. I was relieved to finally be back but eager to return back to learn more about this secret underworld.

When I finally returned back from this underworld I expected that quite some time had passed in my own world. To my surprise, this was not the case, because of the fact that the sun was not rising. It was almost like time was irrelevant in the underworld. I first thought that this idea was highly unlikely because there was also the possibility that so much had past that a full day passed in Cualli. I decided to spend the night at the lake on thinking about what could've happened in the underworld. I started thinking about some very half-baked theories, on what might happen when I entered this underworld. Theories about drastic time dilation, time distortion, and time perception constantly started to pop into my mind. Although these ‘theories’ were anything besides scientific, they did however provide me with some basic understanding of what might have happened. The night was really close to fall, so I decided to hunt for some small prey. I also really needed to search for wood to set camp for tonight. I searched my pockets to take out my dagger, but couldn’t find it anywhere. I searched, searched and searched over and over, to the point I was completely naked and was searching my smaller pockets. The dagger was really dear to me because it was the first weapon my father made me when I was younger. I was about 8 years old that time, and always had difficulties cutting rope or twigs with a stone knife. Although a stone knife is much easier to replace when it’s broken, the dullness of the knife is absolutely dreadful. My father saw me struggling when helping him making some simple tools, so he decided to make me a proper knife. The dagger, made out of copper, tin and other materials to form bronze. Most weapons in our tribe were made by putting small mysterious black shards in a wooden frame to form a spear or longer blades. These shards were produced in volcano’s and were infamous for the sharpness, hardness, and precision in cutting. Although these properties were used in combat, they didn’t provide many advantages for someone who only used them to make tools. Obsidian blades were very expensive and difficult to make, so my father told me it’s not worth it for what I am doing. The bronze dagger was about twice the size of my hands but in a way still manageable to be used as a tool. It took my father a good week to create this dagger. He was also so nice to craft me a leather scabbard and give me a small grindstone. I was provident with this dagger and took good care of it daily. I guess I dropped the dagger when I fell in the mud at my father’s workshop. I luckily remembered that I had a small stone pocket knife laying around here somewhere. I repeated one of the spells my father taught me inside my head, to see the last time I used the knife. This spell gave someone the ability to see what they did in the past. The only downside is that you’re not able to look in the past further beyond one day.

I closed my eyes and was slowly getting lost in my own memory.

I woke up in my memory and saw myself fishing near the lake. I still had the dagger with me at the time. This indicated that I most defiantly lost my dagger at the workshop. With relief, I slowly walked towards myself and sat next to myself. The wind was howling that day, which in turn made it much harder for me to catch fish that day. Although I couldn’t feel the wind breeze or any sensation of the wooden chair I was sitting in, I still always had the feeling that I was really a presence in my memories. The reason I made two chairs near the Lake was that I occasionally had a girl from my village over to help with fishing. This girl named Zyanya which means ‘always or forever’ in Tezcat was someone I was very fond of. She had a great sense of humor and in general the most reliable and trustworthy person I knew at the time. We always reached for another when we had a problem or needed some advice. I still remember the days we snuck out at nights to watch glowing fishes in the small lake. These unordinary types of fishes would only emerge from the bottom of the lake at night. Endlessly we would glance at the beautiful colored reflections they gave from the water. Zyanya who was a very artistic person, would sometimes take a piece of white leather and paint the lake at night. Her father was a pot-maker which used many different kinds of paint. This paint was usually made by squashing a couple of insect, or in some cases grinding colorful flowers with liquid animal fat. Zyanya loved drawing design’s and make up new patterns which her father than painted on the pots and bowls. Sometimes her father had some spare paint she could use from his fresh batch. I always loved how happy and excited she was when she came to pick me up after she got some fresh paint.

Zyanya wasn’t very provident with her leather canvasses her father would give her on her birthday. So most of the times she would ask if ‘we’ could go hunting.

With ‘we’ I actually mean that I do all the hunting while she is carving some wood at the lake. I personally don’t mind it because these are the only occasions I can borrow my father’s bow to go hunting. This bow is one of the many items my father is very provident with because it took him months to craft it and even longer to balance It to his needs. This in turn, meant that It was nearly impossible for me to fully draw the bow. I could get around 2/3 of the draw distance before my shoulders, arm and sometimes even my chest area started to hurt. Nevertheless, I found a way to cope with it and after some self-practice got pretty good at archery. Asking my father to borrow the bow was actually the hard part. If I would ask him on a normal day, the answer would also be no. No buts, why or because of. Just no. However when I asked him if Zyanya and I could borrow his response would always be something like: *“Again? What did Zyanya exactly do for you to make use of your services, my equipment’s and your time.. ”.* I knew where he was going with this, but the awkward part was that Zyanya would always be standing right next to me when he said it. Luckily my mother (which in those cases I saw as my lord and saviour) would shush him up and give the bow regardless. I always felt embarrassed when he did that, but Zyanya just blushed for some odd reason when we left town.

While I was sitting down inside my memory waiting for my ‘other self’ to finish fishing in my memory, I started to glance at the clear water looking at my ‘other self’ and wondering if Zyanya would find me attractive or at least good enough to ever want to have some kind of relationship. In the past few years, I started to see Zyanya more than a friend and this realization still is killing me from the inside. It was the day we went for a dive below a small waterfall somewhere deep in the mountain I also started to glance at her for outer beauty and in a way I started to get feelings for her. When we were younger I personally only saw her as a close friend and companion, but as we got to know each other I wanted something more than a friendship. The simple solution would be to just ask if she was interested or felt the same feeling. The asking was not the part that scared me off, but the possibility that her decision could permanently damage our friendship we developed other the past ten years. I could not and would not risk something like that, just because I feel differently about her…

My ‘‘other self’’ was finally done with fishing and started to walk towards the small cave near the lake. He started to fillet the fish in thin long strips and started to put them on a thick branch. He placed the branch on two sticks above the fire and waited. From inside the cave, I heard Zyanya yell: *“Ahh Ohtil, you finally caught something. About time, my stomach almost started to play some cantares ”.* While she was laughing, My ‘other self’, responded flatly: *“Well, at least an army complains less.”*. She stopped laughing for a moment and responded ireful: *“What does that suppose to mean? Do you think I am annoying?!”.* My ‘other self’ quickly realized the horrors he just brought himself and quickly responded with: *“No!, No! I was just joking relax. Just forget what I said I am sorry.”*. She calmed down a little and said: *“You're lucky I am hungry this time…”.* I was constantly looking at the stupid mistakes I made in the past and always became restless when I saw myself talk to Zyanya in a memory. Sometimes I just wanted to grab my ‘other self’ by the chest and yell: *“You’re screwing it up, stop talking!”.*

I was used talking to Zyanya as a friend and couldn’t find words to ‘impress’ her. The fact that I wasn't a ladies man did help either. At some point, I even started to think Zyanya would find me weird and in the end stop talking to me. I promised myself, that after this memory was over, I would talk to Zyanya and confess my love for her. I thought about it for a while and realized that this might not be the best solution. It would be smarter to first think about what I am going to say before I say it.

My ‘other self’ and Zyanya finished eating in the memory and Zyanya said: *“Thanks Ohtil, that was delicious. I am tired and going to take a nap. Could you wake me up after a couple of hours?”. “Sure, no problem”* my ‘other self’ said. My ‘other self’ was slowly packing up his stuff at the lake and headed toward the cave. He filled a small bowl with water and proceeded to clean his gear with a cloth. He was constantly looking at Zyanya and had difficulties concentrating properly. He was halfway done with cleaning and packing when he suddenly felt raindrops on the back of his head. He quickly took his gear and put it inside the cave. When the gear was safely inside he took his good knife grabbed the scabbard. To his surprise there already was a smaller stone knife inside it. He took out the stone knife and placed it underneath a small rock. He then took his good knife and put it back in the scabbard. He then quickly went back to wake up Zyanya. He first gently poked her cheeks, but this didn’t work. The rain started to get worse the longer he tried. He tried screaming, pulling, pushing, but Zyanya wouldn’t wake up. He had no choice beside carrying her. He laid his right hand between her legs, his left hand underneath her back and lifted her up like a bag of goods. He then walked towards the cave with a slow pace. Although she wasn’t really that heavy he still struggled to properly lift her up at times. Completely out of breath and drenched in sweat he carefully laid her down on the ground near a bonfire. He took off his small cape and laid it next to her. He then grabbed her again and put her on the cape. He took both sides of the cape and wrapped it around her. Half-naked he walked back again toward his gear to retrieve his knife. I could see a small rock above his that was about to get loose. The weather outside was getting worse by the minute. Thunder was striking the forest multiple times, which caused tree tops to burn. One thunder strike landed on a tree top very on top of the cave. The impact caused some vibrations, which in turn made the roof shake. This caused the small rock to come loose and fall down. My ‘other self’ was too slow to dodge it. The rock hit him in the back of his head and he fell to the ground. I laughed and said in a sarcastic tone: “So, this is what Zyanya meant with ‘fainted trying to protect me’… ”. The ground suddenly turned black. The light emitted from the bonfire and torches inside the cave started to fade out. The walls slowly started to get erased. A small hole started to appear in the wall which gave me the opportunity to see the outside world. The underside of tree started to get removed and the trees slowly started to get erased from below. The rain stopped completely during all of this and I could see the last thunder strike slowly being ‘consumed’ by the rising darkness. At last the outside world complete was erased. The sky first changed to a purplish tone and after some time completely became dark. The ground around me slowly started to peel off and got erased in complete darkness. I was now standing in a circle which became smaller by the minute. At some point, the ground was also completely removed. I suddenly fell into a black void. I couldn’t feel any kind of momentum and really didn’t have the feeling I was falling. By looking at my distorted clothes I knew I was indeed falling. At some point my body started to feel strange, I quickly glanced at my arm. My arm started to shed small particles which were floating above me for some time. It was time, the memory was about to end. I closed my eyes and waited for the memory to end.

“OHTIL!.. Ohtil wake up!, Please wake up, I can’t carry you.”. I slowly started to open my eyes. Small beams of light started showing up. A blurry image of the surrounding started to show. Everywhere trees, fields of grass and a small lake started to pop up. I could feel a small breeze of wind passing between my ears. In a shock, I woke up, completely breathless, hungry and thirsty. I saw Zyanya rushing to me as I tried to stand up. She started to hug my head firmly and had no intentions to let go. I felt some tears fall down on my head as she said while crying: “Where were you? I thought you were dead! Please never leave me again…”. Her mood quickly changed however as she let loose and slapped me in the face with her hand as she screamed: “Do you even care about others when making decisions?”. I replied gently: “I am sorry, the guards saw me I didn’t want to get in trouble by dad. I didn’t know what to do so I just ran”. Zyanya calmed down and said in a sarcastic way: “Hmm, not your first time running away from problems or hiding from tough decisions.”. I replied confusingly: “What do you mean with that?”. She said in a playful way: “Nothing”.

She started to blush for a second and reached for her pocket. She said: “Here, you dropped this in the mud.”. She handed me the lost dagger I was looking for earlier. I smiled at her as I was reaching for it. She quickly put her hand down and said: “Ah, ah. I think you forgot to be honest with me and tell me something you’ve been hiding.”. Very confused I replied: “And what would that be?”. She said while giggling: “You know what I mean… now say it.”. I started to think about what she could mean. Suddenly I realized something and said: “Okay, okay… I’m sorry for stealing a small bit of paint to color the leather scabbard with. I should have told you much earlier, but I was scared you would get mad.” Zyanya stopped laughing and punched me in the stomach. She replied irritated with: “You’ll pay back for that… but that is not what I mean you idiot.”. This confused me even more as I tried to figure out what she meant. Then I feared the worst, panicky I said: “Okay, wait I am sorry. Please don’t tell anyone I stole your shirt to smell it. It’s the scent I swear that I like, nothing more… ”. She suddenly screamed: “YOU DID WHAT!!!, You’re such a creep you know that?”. She calmed down and said: “It’s okay I won’t tell anyone, but that is not the secret I meant”.

I said defeated: “Okay I give up, what am I hiding?”. She said in a playful tone: “Well silly, you didn’t tell me you had a crush on me…”. I replied confused: “Wait, what? How did you know? Who told you?”. She giggled: “Well no one but it was quite obvious after the day we went to the waterfall.”. She then continued saying: “At first I wanted to wait until you were going to say it, but even after some time had passed you never did. I started to doubt if you like me anymore so I never bothered to tell you. I wasn’t until I saw a scribbled love-letter you were trying to send I knew you really did have a crush on me. ”. In absolute shock, I replied: “Do you find me weird for not telling you earlier and being so shy about it?”. She replied: “No!, not at all. In fact, I find I kind of cute..”

# 2: An uncertain journey

*“Captain Aksu! Intruders on deck! Wake up!”* I heard. In a rush, I put on my clothes, reached for my sword and scabbard and ran to the deck. In my hurry, I accidentally kicked a bottle of rum causing it to spill all over the floor. Once outside, I was treated with loud thunder and a heavy rainfall. The violent waves caused the ship to wiggle wildly. This caused some of the sailors to become nauseous and eventually to throw up. A fast lightning bolt hit the mast of the small pirate ship, which caused it to fall down. Luckily the mast fell in the opposite direction into the ocean. “Aksu, get down!” I heard Aalia scream. In a split second, I saw a throwing knife passing next to my ears and hitting the wall behind me. I sighed *“phew, that was close.”.*

Aalia was the Lieutenant and was responsible for the navigation. I met Aalia when I was a sailor of a pirate ship. The ship got destroyed one day during a raid and we were captured by soldiers of the Akkadian empire.

In a last stance most of the people fought to the death, which caused them to be eventually slaughtered as they were pierced with swords by multiple soldiers. Bilah and I were commissioned to sneak inside the ship and steal whatever valuable we could find. Bilah was a skinny person which had very good fighting techniques. But during his years of raiding he became a narcissist and enjoyed seeing children suffering. He sometimes would even rape or torture prisoners that got caught during the raids. I always wanted to stop him, but didn’t have the guts to do so, because I feared he would treat me the same. Bilah found a small opening in the lower parts of the ship were we both could fit trough. We both climbed towards the hole using the small cracks and offsets of the ship. Occasionally we had to dodge dead bodies that fell from above. After some struggling we finally reached the hole. Once inside we were treated with piles of valuables, silver coins, spices. For some odd reason the opening that was created during impact was exactly located by the treasure room. We couldn’t believe our eyes when we looked around the room. I immediately said: *“We should report to the captain that we found the treasures.”*. Bilah said with disgust: *“Fuck the captain, do you realise how rich we could become?”*. I yelled angry: *“There are people dying above us! How can you be so ignorant? We should report to the captain so we can escape.”*. Bilah replied laughing: *“Where to? The ship is destroyed remember..”*. He stopped laughing and said in a serious tone: *“The best chance we have is to load the escape raft with whatever valuables we can carry and get the hell out of here.”*. I replied confused: *“Escape raft? What are you talking about? Have you gone mad? We don’t even have one of those.”*. Bilah replied abrupt: *“Yes we do, well no I do to be exact.”.* I have made a small raft before the raid from scrap wood which is just big enough for the two of us and some loot. I replied: *“Please don’t tell me your planning to cross the ocean using that…”.* Bilah said a little irritated: *“Well sorry, your highness the luxury rafts were taken for the moment.”.* He then said: “If you want to live I would advise you to join me. Otherwise… well good luck”. I replied defeated: *“Fine.. But not more than we can carry!”.* Before Bilah could even respond, two guard rushed inside with sword attached on their sides. One guard swung his sword toward Bilah, but he parried it on time. Bilah kicked the left ankle of the guard to bring him off balance and kicked him away. The other guard tried to slash my chest with a strike, but luckily I managed to lock the sword between my guard. I twisted my blade in an attempt to disarm the guard. The guard had some bad grip and the blade skidded out of his hands. I then quickly took my other knife that was strapped to my belt and cut is his hand. I hit some nerves and he was bleeding in a rapid pace which eventually caused him to pass out. The other guard stood no chance as I pierced his chest and Bilah made the finishing blow by cutting of his head in a swing. While we were cleaning our swords with our shirts, I heard a squeaking noise from across the room. I gave Bilah a jog and said: *“Did you hear that noise? It’s coming from that direction.”*. Bilah replied: *“Your fooling yourself, come we have work to do.”*. Suddenly we heard a loud scream coming from that same room. Bilah and I immediately opened the door to see what happened. The doors of the closet broke down due to the ship’s movement. Inside the closet there was a girl roughly my age sitting alone with a small knife. From the dress she was wearing it was clear that her family was rich and she was going on a journey with her parents. Bilah smirked as he said: *“Well well … ,what do we have here. It seems we found an added bonus to our little trip.”*. When Bilah started to approach the girl, she took the knife and tried to poke Bilah. Bilah punched the knife with little effort out of her hands and grabbed her out of the closet. He then carried her on her feet like an animal to a bed and threw her on it. Bilah then said: *“So princes, and what would your name be?”.* The girl screamed: *“Leave me alone you creep!”*. Bilah replied: *“Not much of a talker ey? No problem. I guess I have to fuck the answer out of you.”.* Bilah then proceeded to get on top of her and started to rip of her clothes. The girl screamed and cried: “NO! get off me. Please stop, your hurting me!”. I could not bear the screaming anymore and grabbed my sword. I positioned it at the back of the neck of Bilah. I sighed for a moment, closed my eyes and whispered to myself: “This is the last time…”. In a quick strike I pierced Bilah in the neck and pulled my sword out. There was a huge opening between his neck and he started to bleed out on the bed. In shock the girl jumped off the bed and crawled down in a corner. She wiped the blood of her face and started to cry. I searched for the nearest chair and sat down for a moment to calm down. The effect after adrenaline caused my arm to shake heavily as I tried sheathe my sword. I glanced at girl as she looked at me with fear. I sighed and said: *“I am sorry to scare you. I couldn’t let him hurt you.”*. She wiped off her tears stood back up and replied: *“It’s okay, I am Aalia. Who are you and what do you people want from us?”*. I replied: *“Money to buy food, shelter and to live… Most of us are not able to get a job so stealing from others is our only option. I am Aksu a sailor who lost both his parents because they refused to believe in God. Because of my parents past, nobody dared or wanted to hire me.”*. Aalia interrupted me and said: *“So you just decided it was okay to steal from other, kill innocents who stand in your way…”*. I smirked and replied: *“What do you know about survival? You have crew dedicated to serving you and taking care of your needs. I bet you never even closed an eye without someone checking if you are okay..”*. She replied: *“You are exaggerating. My father always tells be the reason you people are too poor to support yourself is because your too lazy to work.”*. I replied irritated: *“How do you expect me or others to work if we are not allowed to… Do you realise how ridicules you sound?”. “Well you are not the only one suffering…”* she said. *“Suffering? Please enlighten me.”* I replied. Aalia said: *“Well, sometimes I am forced to sit down and listen to the horse crap that comes out of my father’s mouth during Congress. Believe me you don’t know what torture is.”*. I replied: *“You call that suffering? I would kill to be able to even go outside in public with my parents for a day. You should at least appreciate what your family is providing you, instead of complaining about it, like they mean nothing to you..”*. She replied sarcastic: *“Well you would probably kill for a piece bread so you statement doesn’t mean much. ”*. I replied in a serious tone: *“Yes, I probably would just to survive.”*. Aalia mood changed, she took a chair and sat next to me. She said in a serious tone: *“Your parents will always love you no matter the things you have done or had to do in the past. Remember that…”*. She then followed with: *“Can I get you something to drink?”*. “Sure, thanks.” I replied. Aalia walked to a small cabinet with some drinks and poured two glasses with some kind of red juice. After some while it became quiet. The sounds of sword clashing to each other and men screaming stopped. I heard a large group of men storming towards our room and I wasn’t sure if they were soldiers or pirates. I feared that if the Pirates got a glance at Aalia or if they saw Bilah dead on bed, terrible things would happen to Aalia. I told Aalia to hide under de desk and only to come out if everyone had left. A big man with two swords attached to his belt came kicked in the door and a row of soldiers quickly surrounded me. The big man grabbed me by my arm and pushed me on the ground. The group of soldiers started to punch and kick me while the man had me in lock. Aalia quickly got up under the desk and yelled them to stop. The man shed a tear, let me go and hugged Aalia like he hasn’t seen her in ages. Aalia asked for the soldiers to spare my life. To this day I am still not sure why she spared my life.

After I got captured I was taken to a jail specifically made for war criminals and pirates. Every prisoner could randomly be chosen to be executed. My years in prison where pretty lonely because I didn’t bother to make any friend in my time being there. I mean what was the point, they would die eventually. I rather not experience the sense of loss while I am in prison. You will never feel sad for someone if you don’t know him. The only thing that kept me going during these years were the visits from Aalia. She always would tell me tales about an religious place that was somehow connected to ‘another world’. Tales about there being a world where time does not exist and event never happen. Most of the time I would laugh for her believing in such childish fairy tales. What got me worrying however was the fact that she was planning to venture out in the wild to find this ‘wonderland’. I always knew her father would never allow his daughter to put herself in such danger, but in my heart I knew that he couldn’t really stop her. Many times I tried to convince her not to be so foolish and stop believing in those tails because it could make her mad. We always end up in a fight about me not trusting her and thinking she is not responsible enough to make her own decision. For fear of breaking this small bit of contact with the outside world I decided to blindly agree with her to prevent our friendship to be destroyed. One day Aalia came to visit me to show me something. She was very secretive about it and asked for the guards to leave her, because this information was ‘classified’. Under her dress she had hidden a container in the shape of a cylinder. She opened the container and pulled out a rolled letter. Very slowly she started to hand me the letter. Her hand were shaking in the process of handing me the letter. It almost seemed as she was scared to show me this. I slowly opened the letter and saw that is was signed by a judge of the empire. I was not able to read the entire letter because I don’t understand the language but I did see my name underneath the letter. From the looks of it was an execution order that was signed by a judge of the empire. I looked at Aalia with fear asking: *“Is this what I think it is?”*. Aalia started to shed tears as she replied: *“They are going to hold the ceremony tomorrow. I can’t stop them…”*. I looked down at the ground an started to cry. Suddenly I got a flashback to a memory of my mother putting me in bed the night before she died. The memory was very vague but in the background I could hear her repeat: *“Do not fear of what could happen tomorrow because it can impact your life today.”*. These words gave me strength to stop crying and wipe off my tears. I straighten up my back, cleared my throat and asked: *“Is there any way you could help me?”*. Aalia to wiped of her tears and said: *“The only way I could help you is if we both flee…”*. I asked confused: *“Why do we both need to flee? You have no reason to want to escape this empire.”*. Aalia sighed and said in a serious tone: *“I am sick of waiting to find Ichtaca and decided to venture on my own. I need someone to help during my journey. It has to be someone I can trust and not only cares about my money. If you want me to help you escape you have to help me to make this journey.”*. I looked at her with disbelieve and said: *“What makes you think I won’t flee on my own once I am free? You sure put an awful lot of trust in someone you barely know”.* Aalia replied: *“I know you have goodness in your heart and that you care about others. The fact that you risked your life to save me says enough about your character. I also know that you are just trying to survive and will do anything to keep it that way. Besides if you do decide to run off, I can always claim that you tried to kidnap me… It won’t take long before the empire will find you and kill you on sight.”*. I replied confused: *“Why risk everything to chase after a tale, a tale as ludicrous as this one?”*. She replied: *“Since childhood I was always interested in these stories and was determined to find this magical place once I grew up. I have discovered many artefact which point to the existence of this place and I am determined that this place really does exists.”.* I wanted to respond but couldn’t. If I called her idea crazy and refused to go with her, I would die the next time I saw daylight. On the other hand I would rather not spend my entire life chasing a tale. But what could I possibly do? If I decline I would die tomorrow. If I accept I will ruin my entire life. If I decide to escape on my own, the army of the Akkadian empire will chase me for the rest of my life. I lived like that in the past I would rather not go back to that way of life. I rested my head into my hands and started to think about the best decision. After thinking about it for a while I came to the conclusion that joining Aalia was my best option. Who knows, maybe she becomes tired of travelling after a while and decides to give up. I took a deep breath, cleared my throat and replied: *“Fine.. I will join your stupid expedition under one condition.”*. Aalia smiled and said in a sarcastic manner: *“And what will that be, master?”*. *“Nobody and I mean nobody, gets to know who I really am, or will know where I came from. For their concern my origin is unknown.”* I said in a serious tone. Aalia replied shocked: *“Of course, of course. I wouldn’t want to put you in danger by revealing your identity. Your secret is safe with me.”*. Those last words made me calm down and started to relax a little bit. I said: *“Thank you for helping me out*.*”*. Aalia replied: *“Likewise.”*. A couple of minutes passed where nothing was said. The room went completely silent, only the outside noise could be heard. I started to look at Aalia and said: *“When will you help me get out of prison?”*. She replied silently: *“I won’t, I was only able to bribe one of the guards to slip the jail key underneath your door at night. You have to figure out an escape route yourself, I can’t help you with that. ”*. I sighed and said irritated: *“Why didn’t you tell me this before you proposed your idea in the first place.”.* Aalia replied frustrated: *“I didn’t think you would ever agree to go if I told you this, I am sorry but there was nothing I could to help.”*.

I calmed down a bit, lowered my voice and said: *“Relax It’s fine, I am not mad at you. So… , when will the boat leave?”*. Aalia replied timidly: *“Ow you know… tonight.”*. *“WHAT! Are you absolutely out of your mind. How do you expect me to be able to escape and reach you in the same night? Please tell me you are joking me…”* I replied desperately. Aalia said firmly: *“I had no choice, tomorrow is the day my parents return from a feast of my father’s colleague. I faked to be sick so I didn’t have to go. We HAVE to leave for tonight…”.* I sighed: *“Fine.. I’ll try to be there on time. What if I don’t make it?”. “You will be there.”* Aalia replied. We both stopped talking as we heard the guard knock on the door and say: *“My lady we should be going, your father will arrive tomorrow I promised the maidens to not arrive late today.”*. Aalia replied in a sweet voice: *“Just a moment, we will go soon.”*. Aalia tone changed as she whispered: *“When you arrive at the harbor, look for a ship with a white and gold sail. I will leave a window open at the back of the ship on the top floor. Meet me there.”*. I nodded assuredly. Aalia stood up and quickly left the room. A couple of minutes later the guards came in and pulled me off the chair. One guard put my head firmly on the ground as another bound some rope between my hands. After the other guard was done they both grabbed me by the neck and forcefully lifted me up. With my hand tied against my back, the guards carried me towards the door. This was the perfect moment for me to inspect the hallways and to map an escape route. I tried to make sense of all the different paths and turns of the tunnels, but they were too random to map out correctly. I overheard the guards saying that the person responsible for the food delivery to the prisoners was killed yesterday because of blasphemous deeds. This was my chance. I stopped walking and asked if I could get the job. The guards were not amused with my comment and one of them said: *“What reason could a bastard like you have to want to do something useful?”*. The other guard quickly responded with: *“If we remember correctly you’re because of a robbery. Why would a thief like you even care about helping others, you selfish prick?”*. I quickly remembered that I had a gold coin laying underneath my pillow. Aalia once gave it to me as a birthday gift. I always carried it with me but forgot to bring it with me. I replied with a calm tone: *“I have a gold coin that I carried from the robbery, I have hidden it somewhere in my room and would gladly give it to you. If you however let me bring around food.”.* The guards started to look at each other and one of them responded distrustfully: *“I am not buying it. How could a low-level like yourself acquire such amount of money?”*. I shrugged my shoulders and responded: *“Well don’t believe me then, you would surely miss out on a nice bonus.”*. One guard started to become hasty and whispered something at the other guard. The other guard nodded and said: *“Lead the way punk but be quick. I don’t want anybody to find out what we are doing”*. I have been escorted many times to this room from my own room so I remember the path exactly. In a quick pace, I walk the path to my room with guards staying close to me. On guard pushed me aside and opened my door quickly. The other untied me. The guards were waiting in my room impatiently as one said: *“Bring it to me. NOW!”.* I quickly grabbed my pillow and retrieved the coin from it. I put it into my hand as I slowly started to hand it over to the guard. As I was handing the coin over, the eyes of the guard started to open wide as they glittered on the sight of the gold coin. The guards smiled at each other and one said happily: *“Follow me.”*. One guard walked out with the coin, the other waved his hand as a signal to follow him. After going through a series of tunnel connected haphazardly, we finally reached a storage room connected to a kitchen. Inside the kitchen was a small man with a kitchen knife cutting meat alone. Next to him was a large wooden stove to cook the meat in. The guard clapped in his hand and yelled: *“Baku, come forth.”*. The small man rushed his way towards the guards and saluted him. Baku didn’t say a word as if he was too scared to talk. The guard said: *“This is your new delivery boy, make sure this one doesn’t get killed within a week.”*. Baku nodded quickly and bowed down to the guard. The guard then grabbed a piece of cooked meat and left. I greeted Baku and asked him who he was. He looked at my eye lifeless and turned back around. I tried to talk to him but he clearly had no desire to speak. I sat down for a moment and looked at all the different types of cooking supplies. Things like sharp knives, small maces, and big spoons were al present here. I walked up to a rack of knifes and tried to pick one up. Baku looked at me with a fierce look and rushed towards me. Before I could even respond, Baku kicked me in my ankles, which caused me to drop the knife and fall on the ground. He furiously pointed his wooden spoon towards my face and signed me towards a table with small cups of food on a plate. I slowly stood back up and waited until Baku faced his back on for an opportunity to grab the knife. I had hidden it underneath my trousers and moved towards the table.

I started to layer the cups of food on the plate for a while, when Baku suddenly walked towards me with a piece of paper. He looked upon me with a sign of distrust for a moment as he handed it to me. Confusingly I asked: “*What’s this for?*”. Without any kind of response, Baku just walked back to his table. I open the piece of paper and took a quick glance. It looked like some kind of map of the prison which showed some small rooms. I walked up to Baku and asked politely: “What are these rooms with numbers?”. With no surprise Baku did not respond and pulled another piece of paper out his jacket. This was a list sorted by two rows of numbers and one row of names. At that moment the map made sense. It was a map of the prison cells ordered by room numbers. Each person stayed in one room and was allowed to have a certain amount cups of food. Baku forcefully turned me back around and pushed me towards the table with cups of food. This map was perfect. It wasn’t very detailed, but it provided a good look on the overall shape of the prison. I could use this map as guide and take a piece of charcoal to mark important spots of the prison. I know I had to act quickly and come with a plan before the night would fall, otherwise I wouldn’t make it on time to reach the boat. I was finally done stacking the cups on the plate and looked around for a piece of charcoal. I found a fire stove which had some charcoal spilled on the side. I bend over and searched for a long piece with a narrow tip to write with. After some searching I finally found the right piece I was looking for. When I stood up straight, I saw that Baku was giving me a confusing look like he was trying to say: “*What do you think you are doing?*”. I quickly said: “*I need something to mark the rooms I have visited.*”. Baku nodded and got back to work. I grabbed the plate of food and headed out the door towards the first room. There were a total of a hundred rooms I had to visit according the list. The first ten people I had to visit were quite normal and wouldn’t talk. The eleventh person I had to visit was a little bit strange. He sat alone in a corner with his eyes covered in white ash (most likely from the burning corpses) and kept yelling: “THE BLACK HAND IS RISING UP!! We are doomed! We need to warn the others and stand together. WE CANNOT DEFEAT THEM ALL ALONE, SOMEONE PLEASE LISTEN TO ME!!”. He had blunt kitchen knife in his hands which he used to carve weird but beautiful geometric drawings on the wall. He filled the carvings with either charcoal or ash to add some color. One drawing caught my attention in particular. It was a circle made out of many smaller squares with some weird text in the middle. I could not figure out what language it was, but I looked quite menacing. The man was very skinny and wore some kind of long tunic. The strange this was, that the tunic was brightly colored, something that was very unusual to wore by a peasant. His clothes were shredded covered in ash and blood. His head was bold and he wore some very basic sandals hold together by a thing piece of string. I walked up to the man to deliver his cup of food. When he saw me approaching him he quickly started to crawl towards me. He was pushing his face out of the feeding hole as far as he could as he started to say: *“HEY, I know you are trying to escape. I have a very special key that needs to get delivered to someone outside the city. Can you help me? He will be sure to reward you.”* . Shocked I replied: “*Do I know you? What makes you think I am trying to escape? Even if I was attempting to escape, why would I trust you?”*. He smirked put his face out of the hole and started to say: “*Boy, there is no time. The Black Hand can send they’re creatures anytime now. You need to deliver this to the temple in Hursagmu, before it’s too late…*”. I replied while laughing: *“Do you seriously expect me to be able to travel to Hursagmu. Even if I had the possibility to go there, how to do you expect me to physically go there. It is a floating island somewhere middle in the ocean. There are only tales about this ‘magical temple’. Please don’t expect me to believe this utter nonsense. This room made you crazy, decrepit and made you believe fairy tales.”*. The man went very quiet for a moment, cleared his throat and said firmly: “*Your name is Aksu, your lost your family as a child because they were unfaithful. You lived your entire life as a pirate and are currently thinking about a way to escape with a lovely gal named Aalia…*”. I complete shock and utter disbelief I slowly started to mumble: “How.. how do you know all of this? Who, What are you??”. He replied: *“My name is Alec, I am a nomad of the temple in Hursagmu. I have studied relics from the Tezcat’s tribe for years now and finally got a glimpse of the immense power some of them can give you. I have the ability to read peoples mind to find out what they did in the past.. Aksu listen to me very carefully. These people, all of them are in great danger. A relentless force is about to hit this world, and if I don’t bring this key to the other nomads on Hursagmu, I fear this world will no longer exist. I know you doubted yourself many times in the course of life, but I want you to know to never blame yourself. You did what was necessary to survive. I also know you have goodness in your heart and are somebody to be trusted. So I beg of you, to take this seal and this key and give it the other nomads in Hursagmu.”*. As he handed me the items I looked Alec deep in the eyes, I sighed and nodded my head. I then replied: *“I will inform Aalia about this discovery, if she agrees to go to Hursagmu I can deliver it. Otherwise there isn’t much that I can do for you…”*. Alec smiled back and said: ”*Thank you, I have faith that she would want to go. Good luck on your journey my child.*”. Alec turned around smiling and laid on the ground. I put the items underneath my pockets next to the knife and started working again. During my shift I noticed that one guard would always sit alone far away from the others. I also noticed he was wearing a big helmet that did a good job of masking his face. Suddenly I came up with the most brilliant idea. Close to night I would walk inside the prison, towards the spot the guard usually sits alone. I would subdue or kill the guard and use his outfit as a disguise. After that it was just as simple as walking out I thought. But the problem was that I rather not kill someone who just sits down to do his job. That taught of ending someone’s life who just obeys commands from another jackass was too much for me. I already did some horrible things to survive I didn’t want to make it even worse. I had to come up with an idea to subdue the guard for a long period of time. I needed something that could subdue him long enough for me to get away, but not be too fatal. My first taught was to use poison, but that was too difficult to make and very lethal. After thinking about it for a while, the best solution I could come up was to simply bash his head with a stick to knock him unconscious. I remember there being a big wooden spoon in the kitchen used by Baku that would be perfect for the job. When I was done with the rooms in the area I tried going to the next, but there was big wooden door, which had a difficult lock on it. There was no way I was able to lock pick this. I tried opening the door, but it would not budge. After ramming on the door for a while, the guard finally woke up. He looked around him confused and noticed me ramming on the door. He started to walk towards me with a chain of keys. He pushed me aside and opened the door. He signed me to go in and closed the door violently after I went inside. The room I entered was very big compared to the other two I visited and had many big windows to peek out of. After bringing the food around I started to inspect the room a little bit. One window took my interest as it was extremely close to the outside wall. There were only a few guards who roamed the roofs, but at night their sight was very limited in these dark places. I could not just jump from the wall once I reached it, because I would severely injure myself trying to scale that wall. I could walk on the wall towards a tower and then descend until I am comfortable about making the jump. This idea might be riskier but it will be easier and save me some time. I decided to put this idea on hold for the moment. As I continued working I got a good glance at all the spot I could mark and the place I could hide (in case that was needed). After a while I was confident enough to be able to walk here at night with all the lights off. After my shift was done, I returned back to my cell.

The night was about to fall. The moon slowly started to rise as it started to begin to get darker and darker. This night it rained heavily which was very useful for me to hide my noise. The sky started to become purple. The moon on Cualli was very strange, from time to time it’s reflection would change from white to a dark shade of purple. Many professors, scientist and philosophers tried to find an explanation, but all failed. The night was very beautiful as the purple light got reflected by the clear raindrops. It looked like purple starts were falling down from the sky. I held my fingers in a triangle shape and looked at the stars in the sky. My father once learned me how to ‘read’ the time by looking at certain differences in start points. After a while I concluded that it was very close to midnight, the time most prisoners were asleep. Very gently I got out of bed and sneaked my way up to the door. I grabbed the key I got from Aalia and silently opened the door. I took a quick peek outside before I entered the room. Very quickly but as silent as possible I sneaked my way up to the kitchen. I avoided walking I direct light as long as I could an sticking to the sides of the wall. Once I finally reached the kitchen after following a series of hallways that intersect with each other, I took my kitchen knife I hid in my trousers and gently started to cut a hole in the door. The door had a big lock that was nearly impossible to lock-pick. Even if I managed to lock-pick the lock, it would take up some much time, that Aalia would have left already. Each time I trusted my knife in the wood door, it made an annoying squeaking sound. It wasn’t loud enough to wake someone up by any means, but the fear of being caught made it sound much louder than it actually was. After a series of long and painful cuts, I finally managed to make a hole, big enough for me to fit in. While crouching, I entered the kitchen. I started to sneak my way up to Baku’s dorm. The room was completely dark apart from a few candles being lid on the table. The darkness made it very hard to navigate between the clutter on the ground. Halfway in the room, I suddenly kicked my foot against an old pot. It got launched against a table foot, and broke in 4 pieces. The noise of the pot being broken was very loud and could be heard all across the room. I quickly hid under a table and cropped up inside, while I laid under the table. With suspense I waited for a reaction. Every moment Baku, could barrage out of his dorm to check out what happened. I waited for a while, but nothing happened, no one entered the room, Baku was still snoring in his dorm. I slowly started to get on my knees. I wiped off the sweat on my forehead and came out from under the table. There was a thick layer of spit stuck in my throat which forced me to swallow a couple of times. I finally reached Baku’s dorm. Luckily this door did not had a lock and could be opened easily. Silently I entered the room. I could hear Baku breathing heavily. Next to him were a set of rather interesting drawings, where I am not going into much detail about. He was laying on his sides and seemed to be very exhausted. On his other side, the keys to leave the first section of the prison laid down. At first I thought the keys were loosely sitting on his bed. At further inspection I noticed that the keys were strapped around his trousers with a piece of rope. I kneeled close to his side and tried to untie the knot. After a couple attempts, I gave up and decided to cut the rope with the knife. I pulled the side of the knot towards me, and started to cut deep in the strings of the rope. Suddenly Baku wakes up randomly while I am still cutting thee rope. He tried to push me aside but I dodge it. Before he had time to stand up, I quickly sat on top of him, with my knife facing towards his throat. I said firmly: *“Scream, yell or tell anyone and I will kill right here…”*. To my surprise he started laughing and said: *“You’ll be dead before you leave this section.. It’s a shame, really… I actually started to like you.”*. Baku took my knife, cut off the remainder part of the rope and gave the keys to me. He looked me in the eyes like I was fool and turned back on his side to sleep. On that notice I left the room normally towards the door of the first section. While I was in the kitchen, I searched for a large piece of wood that I could use to subdue the guard. I found a big wooden spoon laying on the ground. I grabbed it and walked towards the exit. The room was completely silent, besides the sound of Baku snoring. I took the map I altered and placed it besides a lit candle. I started to trace the lines that represent hallways and tried to memorize the path I had to take. After a while I felt confident enough that I started my journey. I followed the path I memorized in my head and truth be told, I finally reached the door of the first section. I used all the keys on the chain, one by one until the 5th key fit the keyhole. I gently twisted the lock and opened the door by applying minimal force. The door made a silent but yet annoying cracking sound and every second felt like an hour. Once inside I increased my pace and started to following the route I felt most comfortable with. I completely ignored all the background noise and just kept walking. At last I had reached the final section with the guards. Like I suspected, the guards were sleeping on their duty all grouped together. The lonely guard sat alone on a chair near the door. To my surprise he like all the others did not fall asleep but was very drowsy. I had the advantage that I marked all the hiding spots of the area, I case the guard would want to walk around. There were also a lot of dark areas were a person would be completely masked if he stood in the shadows. I decided that this was the best approach to get near the guard. First I followed alongside a wall which was completely masked by torches being unlit. In my days as a pirate, I had to sneak my way into various spaces, this caused my hearing to be incredibly good. After I will I got the ability to walk alongside the background noise of a room, which would completely mask out the sounds of my own footsteps. Which this knowledge and experience I started to walk in dynamic pace, varying from the amount of background noise. When I finally reached the end of the first wall, I walked criss-cross inside the room following the path the shadows gave me. After a dreadfully difficult amount of time, I finally managed to reach the back of the guard. I was surprised by the fact that the guard was not able to see me, even when I was walking inside the room. I hold my breath as the guard started to breathe out. I grabbed my wooden spoon, and started to breathe out as I swung the spoon towards the guards head. I had the luck that he was not wearing his helmet (probably because it weight to much) and had direct contact with his skull. He luckily did not start to bleed, but he did fell of his chair face down towards the ground. The other guards were in such a deep sleep, that they didn’t even hear their ‘friend’ falling on the ground. His hands were open and had minor bruises because they got scraped on the ground. His body was completely flat, but I could still hear him breathing. They keys laid underneath his right hand. I gently pushed that hand aside and grabbed the keys, with as little noise as possible. I walked towards the door with a normal pace and opened it silently. As I entered the other side of the door, a dim light shined on my face. This room had much more lit torches which made it seem look brighter. I stopped walking and looked outside the window. I was not sure which option to take, the disguise or the quick escape. When I walked towards the window, I had a better view of the prison. I saw a large group of prisoners being checked individually by an officer. The disguise option was clearly not an option anymore…

The weather outside was starting to get worse. Loud thunderstorms appeared from the sky. The rain became denser, which made the field of view much smaller. This was a good thing however, because it allowed me to sneak past the guards easier. With care, I climbed into the window and started to descend my body. I always knew that you needed 3 points of contact to prevent falling to your death. With that simple rule is started to descend on the wall. There were a lot of bricks and stones that were sticking out. Because of the heavy rain, these gripping points, became rather wet and slippery. Luckily I only needed to descend a little bit to the left to jump on a roof top, but the climb was starting to take a toll on my hands. I almost made it to the point I was trying reach, when suddenly my left leg lost contact which caused my whole body to shift to the right and my second contact point was now also gone. I only had one hand that had to support the weight of my entire body. I tried everything I could, but my legs were not able to make contact. I looked down but could not see the bottom thanks to the dark night. I had the feeling I was doomed for and started to lose hope. I started to look at the moon as my hand started to lose more grip by the second. Any sane person would had screamed, yelled or cried for help. But for some weird reason I couldn’t give up. While I was staring in the moon I saw an illusion of the beautiful face of Aalia shining, whispering: *“Aksu! Don’t give up… You need to pull yourself together. ”*. These words motivated me to not give up. With all my strength I pushed my fingers deep around the brick. I started to hoist myself up using only one hand. After a couple seconds, my legs were close enough to the contact points and I pushed my toe with force on the brick. Finally I had multiple contact points and could finish the climb.