

time he stares at you. Finally he rises and steps closer. "So, you are what my hunters found. My name is Arton. I am the High Raka of the village of Rakmara."

You are so startled by the familiar words that it takes you a minute to answer. "How is it you speak my language?" you finally ask.

Arton smiles. "A visitor from the Nether World. She called herself Nera."

"Dr. Vivaldi? *She's alive? Where?*"

The old Raka shakes his head. "She tried to swim across the Great River. The river spirits have swallowed her."

"She might have made it across!" you say.

"Even if she did, the Archpods would have fed her to the Kota beasts."

"What are Archpods?"

"The Archpods live beyond the Great River. For a long time the Rakas and Archpods have each had one hunting boat; that is the law. Now the Archpods build many boats. They are not hunting boats; they are war boats. The Archpods plan to conquer Rakmara."

You hold your head in your hands. Poor Dr. Vivaldi! And now the threat of war.