Chapter 7: The Longest Road Home

By Tomas Rodriguez

The tip of the wand cast a shine in the writer’s eye that would not let him concentrate on the 6th chapter of his novel that lay trapped in his mind as opposed to the pages of the notebook before him. The way it captured the light transfixed the poor writer to the point that he-

“Hey, is your turn over yet?” the wand’s owner asked, a greying wizard who, along with the writer, had begun their journey through the desert three days ago in Riverend. It had been the wizard who had suggested a pilgrimage to Folcrest.

Because of this, the writer had to endure three terrible nights of Cold and sand.   
“Have I ever told you”, the writer asked, “how gaudy your wand is?”

“It’s too large, I admit,” the wizard said, putting down the cards he had in his hand to his bony, withered fingers along a large heft of wood engraved with the crisscross of various runes intelligible only to himself. “It feels somewhat less of a wand and more of a small club”. Atop was engraved a sapphire the size of a man’s fist which, as rumor had it, was either the transfigured heart of a former lover that the wizard could never let go, or a cage for the souls extracted during gruesome and unholy experiments, depending on which side of the Perthian river you preferred your tale tales from.

“Come on, let’s get back to the game” said the camel merchant. She had been waiting patiently for the conversation to end, but the sound of Cold outside seemed to be drawing salty water from her scalp.

The writer caressed the wand with the hand that wasn’t holding the game’s cards. “What’s wrong, you don’t like the wand?”

“What of? Even if it were a proper wand, your precious Lord Charlatan couldn’t make so much as a breeze. Now, is your turn over or not?”

“I am no charlatan!” the wizard cried, standing up with fire in his cheeks. Outside, Cold cried the sound of thunder, and the tent began to shake at the grasp of his hands.

“Can you summon a horse?” Outside, the final horse to have survived trading season was lying down, dreaming of sunlit fields of grass and fresh water with no camels in sight. The camels, similarly, were thinking of days with no horse drinking *their* water. One of the camels could be heard protesting Cold’s molestation, but the camel merchant did not stir.

“I…”The wizard gazed up and down his wand, and sat back down. “I cannot.” His age began to settle on his face.

The writer sensed an opening. “Can you call upon rain?”

The wizard covered his face with the cards of the game. “I’d, well, I’d prefer not to you know. Cold is terrible enough without allies.”