

Sistrovious



Plendisecort.



Morence.

ASTRONOMICAL FACT

TOPIC- THE REVERSAL OF EVENTS.

INFORMATION-

It has been scientifically proved that there might be many galaxies in the universe with the presence of a similar terrestrial planet like Earth. It has also been proved that in such galaxy with such a planet, the characters might be the same with the same role or with some other role. I simply mean to say that there might be a planet where I will not be writing this book and might be a cobbler or something and there might be a planet on which you may be the richest person!

This thought invites a lot of somnolent revelries, doesn't it?

PROLOGUE

Battle of Waterloo (1815)

Napoleon sat in his bivouac, revising strategies and turning over his moves over and over again. He had made the inclusive chronology of what event was going to take place and when, in his mind of the next day. His dynamic imagination had even visualized his ascent to the British throne and his universal emperorship there from. He knew that this Battle would either make him the mightiest or would bury him beneath the silent mould. He expelled all pessimistic thoughts from his mind and mentally prepared himself for the biggest face-off of his life.

Gulls crashed against his face and he got up quite briskly, to mobilize his troops, perhaps for the final time.....

The battle began at 11:30 a.m. with a gambit by Napoleon at Wellington's right. This contrive, which proved futile, was followed by an 80-gun French onslaught intended to weaken the allied centre. At about 1 p.m. Napoleon saw advance elements of Blücher's army approaching from the east. Once again the emperor dispatched a communication to Grouchy, apprising him of the circumstances and ordering him to overtake and take on the Prussians.

Fierce cavalry and infantry engagements were being fought meanwhile along the crest, south of Mont-Saint-Jean that sheltered Wellington's main force. In each instance the French attacks were savagely repulsed. At 4 p.m. Blücher's advance troops, who had been awaiting an opportune moment, entered the battle and forced the French to fall back about 0.8 km. A counter-attack restored the French lines and pushed the Prussians back 1.6 km to the north-east. Shortly after 6 p.m. Ney drove deep into the Anglo-Dutch centre and seriously endangered Wellington's entire line. Wellington rallied, however, and Ney was driven back.

Heaps of dead bodies were all which could be seen, and wounded French officials fell hopelessly. Napoleon then mounted a desperate general offensive, during which he committed all but five battalions of his Old Guard to an assault on the allied centre. Allied infantrymen, formed into hollow squares, inflicted severe losses on the French, crushing the odious.

Although Napoleon regrouped his shattered forces and attacked again. He encouraged his forces, recollecting his half shattered forces and started covering the Allies. He massed over 200,000 men and drew reserved forces left in secondary position.

The French became encouraged to put an end to Britain's maneuver. Britain's troops were now pushed in a corner of the war field .Bluicher's troops too covered the French from all sides .But, Napoleon held on, encouraging his troops, and pierced the Britain's tactics.Napolean severely attacked Bluicher's troops and kept covering the Allies. Now, the French started a blood bath. The decisiveness of the battle increased. French troops reversed the Britain's tactics to use on them in return and made the battle a massive massacre. Allies weakened and the French humiliating British Allies, registered biggest victory even after terrible and lethal blows in the beginning. French troops' cheering pierced the air and Napoleon stood on the crest, looking down, admiring his supreme area of control.....

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YEARS

LATER

I

Overlooking the tall cemetery, stood a wired fence tightened against two ramparts which barred one from looking at the part behind this wide railing. On the entrance which stood in the centre of this railing, was written—“GALNOVIO” in light blue letters. There were several creeper plants which surrounded the entrance and one found it difficult even to look at this word printed on the entrance. It was twilight and queer looking lamps which were hung at regular intervals across the great cemetery, partially illuminated area around them. It was a very peaceful morning and the calm was only perturbed by the various insects who sung their songs merrily, perhaps unacquainted of the fact that this time was supposed to be a quite one. “Where did you keep the letter?” suddenly, came a voice, whispering, but quite distinctly manly which disturbed the calm.

“Just next to the dining table. I know he would see it. He would always look at that spot. It always had something to eat.” replied a woman. As they jumped across the wall to the other side, one could see in the twilight that they both carried a big traveling bag and held a queer looking object which gave them light. The woman was a tall lady with golden freckles scattered untidily over her face. But she had bright eyes sparkling with vitality which made her face, altogether, beautiful. The man was even taller with rather a wild beard and moustache which gave an impression that he had been so busy in the recent past that he hadn’t got time, even to shave. But just like the woman, he too had sparkling eyes and a smiling face.

“Better take out your macil gun now, it’s rather not safe.” said the man putting his bag down and taking out a strange looking cubical box which had a narrow opening at one face and a long handle on the other face. The opening was closed by a narrow lid which could be detached. He held this object on his shoulder with the handle and it was distinct from the way he carried it that the object was very heavy.

The woman too put the object on her shoulder and started walking hurriedly. They both crossed the shallow canal that flowed beside the great wall and entered the woods.

Here, the vegetation was thick and every inch of land was covered by small herbs and grasses but they staggered on with some difficulty through these thick forests. After walking every few meters the man looked at a map

which he carried in his pocket and then after staring at it for some time, started walking again in the same direction in which he had been walking till then. The woman followed him but she was taking much more care of her bag which she opened at very regular intervals and then after looking at something, started walking again contently.

“HIDE!!!” whispered the man suddenly and hid behind a huge tree. The woman responded to his command almost immediately and hid behind a thick bush.

“How do you suppose will we cross these traitors?” said the man pointing at armed guards who stood in a bright yellow uniform and blue turban in front of a huge entrance which was surrounded by the same wired fence and tall wall but to the opposite side of the entrance on which “GALNOVIO” was in print. On the entrance was written—“NESPHEREO” in golden letters which could be seen from a great distance. This part looked newer and brighter and better maintained.

The woman replied nonchalantly, again opening her bag, “I have no idea whatsoever”.

“I never knew that this part lies in between the path to Dulen.”

“Neither did I.”

“Suggest something. Don’t be impertinent.” the man whispered.

“I really don’t know.”

“I think we will have to fight th—AAARRGGHHH!!!” a bullet pierced the man’s head and the second bullet, his stomach and he fell on the ground, shrieking and howling in pain. The woman suddenly got up but didn’t cry or howl. She brusquely snatched the map from the man’s hand that lay powerless on the forest’s ferny floor and sprinted with her bag held tightly in her hands.

“GET THE LADY!!!” yelled a commander and chased the woman with many soldiers with him.

“You check this man’s pockets. There might be something useful.” the commander ordered to a fellow soldier, pointing towards the man.

The woman sprinted, having no knowledge whatsoever of where she was going and where was her destination. She cursed herself for being nonchalant with her husband in the last instant. Of course the soldiers had heard them talk and had covered them from all directions and had shot her husband. Her eyes were wet with tears and her whole body was turning to a mass of lead giving the message that her last time had come. She had got a responsibility, the responsibility.....This thought gave her courage and she ran through the thick forests which once had seemed nice and beautiful to her but now seemed only impediments. She cannot let the map go in wrong

hands; it will be devastating for Galnovio as well as Dulen, she thought and continued to sprint. Her ears had become hyper sensitive and every sound that was produced even by her feet crushing the leaves beneath, seemed to her the sound of the soldiers chasing her. This made her run faster even though her legs were aching terribly and she was desperately gasping for breath. This pursuit automatically came to an end when she experienced that she had reached a dead end. She was standing on the crest of the heath and there was nothing ahead but deep roaring waters and sharp hungry rocks. She could hear the footsteps of the soldiers approaching nearer and nearer. That was it, she thought. The dream that she and her husband had imagined had crashed into ruins. The choice was quite simple; either surrender in front of the guards and give them the Dulen's map or surrender in front of nature and give the map to it to take care of it forever, she thought. She would definitely prefer nature; she decided and faced the heath. Very carefully, she set her bag down on the crest and stared at it for some time. "I am so sorry"; she muttered facing towards the bag. Meanwhile, the footsteps approached nearer. But even before the soldiers could come in the line of sight, she jumped in the heath with the map in her hand; her head struck a sharp rock below and the roaring water gulped her silently just like a hungry whale. "Oh! She has jumped down the waterfall, sir" said a soldier approaching the heath.

"DAMN!!" yelled the commander, "Well, check the bag which is kept on the crest." said he, noticing the bag.

A soldier approached the traveling bag and opened it.

"Nothing special, sir. Oh! Hullo, there is an infant in it sir, a small boy, fast asleep though." replied the soldier and he picked up the boy.

"That surely means that she got the map along with her, the fiend!" commander shouted indignantly.

"What should we do with the infant sir?" asked one of the soldiers.

"Let's get him along with us; Professor Mortati will decide his future."

replied the commander and they rushed back towards their native area.

Commander knew that Professor Mortati will be genuinely indignant but it was not his mistake....

NINE
YEARS
LATER

II

“MOTHER! MOTHER! WATER! WATER!!!!” shouted a young boy sitting on a big armchair majestically in the early hours of morning.

“Walter, I think this is the one billionth time I am telling you that there is nothing called water; its ivel; the clear transparent liquid that calms thirst.” replied Seph Smit getting him a glass of ivel “and Oh! My naughty dear lamb, aren’t you ready yet? We are to go out today.”

She ran towards Walter, picked him up in her arms and threw him in the bathroom, “OFF YOU GO!!” she bellowed.

She took out a big suitcase that lay beneath Walter’s bed and started throwing Walter’s clothes, toys, collections and other articles mercilessly in it. Walter appeared within a minute, wet and trembling. His mother immediately dried him with his half battered towel and got him dressed in his only garments which were not ruined by him.

“I keep getting you new clothes and you keep destroying them. This time I have pledged that I won’t get you new clothes until you learn how to use them well. CLOTHES ARE SUPPOSED TO BE WORN AND ARE NOT USED FOR MAKING TENTS WHEN YOU HAVE A HOUSE HUNDRED TIMES BIGGER THAN YOUR BALLY TENT.” she yelled as Walter ran towards the tent which he had made by tying all his clothes and bed sheets together. She caught him by his arm and dragged him towards their house’s gate on 34, Fryster Street.

“Are you ready coachman?” she asked approaching a very odd carriage. On it was written—“RUELL VEM” at the rear. The carriage had normal seats but didn’t have wheels. It instead had flat magnetic base. The driver’s chamber was separated from the carriage and a big magnetic rod protruded from the front part. A similar magnetic rod was present at the carriage’s rear.

“Yes madam.” replied the coachman. Seph Smit and Walter (he had to be pushed in the carriage with the combined strength of the coachman and his mother as he didn’t want to go and wanted to remain in his tent) mounted the carriage. The coachman put the front rod down and it maintained a constant distance with the flat magnetic base with the help of the hook. The rod and the base attracted each other and the carriage started to move over the fleece like floor. When the coachman had to decelerate, he just put the front rod up and the rear rod down. The rear rod and the flat base attracted each other and the carriage slowed down.

The roads were not made of any special material but were made by carving the snow which perpetually covered the Sistrovius's surface. The tall trees growled under the weight of snow which they carried on their branches. Walter now sat silently and looked at the various sights which he found very pleasing. They approached the statue of Morence, their God towards whom Seph Smit clasped her hands together and prayed but Walter simply stared at this statue. After opening her eyes Seph Smit glared at Walter who too joined his hands and tried to attain a faintly unctuous holy look for which he received a kiss from his mother. Several houses and streets passed them looking just like a landscape from a distance. The road was quite empty excepting the carriages of government officials who rushed to their offices in their speeding vehicles.

A similar carriage overtook them and Walter too got excited and pricked the coachman on his neck to speed up the vehicle and win the race. Seph Smit never protested as she herself felt that this was perhaps the last time she was seeing his son's playful manner...

Seph Smit and Walter stood facing a huge gate on which was written—"PLENDISECORT" in golden letters. Below this was written—"24, Giopyt Street, Galnovio." Seph Smit held Walter's hand and entered the place. Everything here was made of wood; but the wood was very beautifully carved with big figures of Morence and his triumph over the legendary villain, Justel. The ceiling was very high and was dome shaped.

"I want to meet Professor Birklee. Is he at the base?" inquired Seph Smit going over to the Reception table.

"I am sorry madam. He just went over to his residence. You may take the Aerial Ruell Vem to Plendisecort main building due to depart within five minutes." replied the Receptionist courteously.

Seph Smit thanked him gracefully and walked towards the Aerial Ruell Vem launch pad with Walter. There were many people like them on the launch pad waiting to go over to the royal Plendisecort main building. Very soon a carriage, triple the size of a normal Ruell Vem, arrived. Walter and his mother got themselves seated in the ARV which rose to a height of about 50 meters from the ground again with the activity of the repelling power of the strong magnets and sped towards Plendisecort's main building. The complete route was over a magnet-made road which helped them to maintain a constant distance from the ground level. They passed many tall and snow-capped hills and cliffs to finally reach the signpost—"Plendisecort-National School of Galnovio" where they landed. Walter all this time had kept quite and had pinned his nose to the ARV's window to look at all the sights

below. The ARV rose again and headed to the school's main building. Walter watched it go until it became out of sight. From a distance, it just looked like an enormous bird. Here, many houses could be seen which were based at the foothill of a snow capped cliff. They now entered a small house on which was written—"Professor Birklee (senior Sistros Professor-Plendisecort)". A masked thin and tall man appeared in response to the bell rung by Seph Smit.

"If I have guessed it right you are Mrs. Seph Smit and this is Walter." said he inviting them in and shaking hands with Seph Smit and Walter. Walter didn't seem to like this man as he looked quite ethereal in his all-covering mask. He maintained a distance with Birklee and held his mother's hand very tightly.

"Please take a seat." Birklee said as they settled in his drawing room which was quite plainly decorated "How can I help you?" he continued sitting down himself on an easy chair.

"Professor, my son, Walter is nine years old now but he hasn't started speaking Sistros." she said.

"How do you come to know of his requirements then?" asked the Professor, appalled.

"All his requirements are confined to words which I think he has made all by himself. Like he uses the word "Water" when he wants ivel, uses the word "car" for Ruell Vem and so on. I didn't quite understand them in the beginning but now I have acquainted with them" lied Mrs. Seph Smit avoiding Birklee's eye. Professor Birklee sat in his chair, deep in thought.

"What do you want of me then?" he said suddenly.

"Sir, I want you to keep Walter with yourself for a year and teach him Sistros." she said plainly. "When he is ten I want him to give Plendisecort's entry test so that he has a bright fut—"

"I quite well see that. Well let us see." interrupted Professor Birklee. "I think I can try and help you." He finally said after meditating for some time.

"Oh! Thank you sir. I just can't tell you how thankful I am. I will complete all formalities sir." said she profusely.

"Have you got his luggage and everything? I would like to start my classes today itself." said Birklee getting up quite briskly without responding to Seph Smit's gratitude statements.

"Yes, sir I have got everything, sir. Walter, I want you to be well mannered and obedient. I would be coming at regular intervals to meet you." said Seph Smit, getting Walter his luggage and turning away to face the entrance. Walter, although didn't understand a word of what she said as it was all in Sistros but still he sensed that he had to live with the mask-man now. His

eyes suddenly became wet but even before he could cry out or howl or run to her mother, an overpowering but warm hand rested on his shoulder. He looked up to see a beautiful woman who stood beside Professor Birklee.

“That’s my wife; she will be taking care of your food and everything.” said Professor Birklee in fluent English after his mother’s departure. It was for the first time in many days that he had understood everything that someone said. He hugged Birklee who was smiling at him warmly. Before, all this had happened Seph Smit was already on the ARV to her way back. Walter didn’t even look back at his mother. He was too glad at the prospect of getting someone who knew his language. Mrs. Birklee held his hand and took him to a very beautifully decorated room which once had belonged to their son. Walter liked every inch of this room.

“You must know that the language you know is called English. This language is completely prohibited in Galnovio. I don’t know how you know English if your mother doesn’t know it but you must not speak English, ever. I will be teaching you Sistros from tomorrow. As your mother said, you must work hard and must be obedient. I tell you, you will be speaking fluent Sistros within a year.” Birklee said warmly in English, with a smile.

How did Birklee know his language, Walter wondered. Walter even wondered how he himself did know a language which was not spoken at all in Galnovio. He hardly cared. He had got someone who understood him. Even though Seph Smit had been a very good mother, he never felt warmth when he was with her. But this warmth he could find in Mrs. Birklee.

Professor Birklee went out of the room asking Mrs. Birklee to attend to Walter. He went and sat on his arm chair, thinking very hard. This was weird, exceptionally weird. How did Walter know English if his mother didn’t know it at all? Did his mother expect him not to understand a script when he has conducted a research in 27 languages? Surely his mother was lying. English was the language of Nesphereo. She must be having some relation with Nesphereo, he decided. He hardly cared. He just had to do his business. He went out of his house to catch a glimpse of the snow capped mountains which glimmered because of the bright rays of Lom which fell obliquely on them.

III

Walter sat in his room on his study table, half asleep. Mr. and Mrs. Birklee were out for some business which they hadn't told him and he felt irritated at this lack of knowledge about his background affairs and his surroundings. Walter now knew fluent Sistros which Professor Birklee had taught him working hard, day and night. He was ten now and felt that it was time he started knowing things. His physical appearance too had undergone a change. He was three inch taller and was fairly masculine which was at odd variance from his skinny past. He had big bright blue eyes which shined with vitality. Although he didn't have an all-smiles face but his bright eyes, his masculine frame and his eloquence made his personality, quite frankly, attractive. He remembered the gala night that he and Birklees had planned with him. This was his last day at the Birklees. This thought made him turn over. He had had great fun with the Birklees. Even though their ambiguous silences at his mentioning their son, their secret gossips which he had noticed as Birklees gossiped extremely seriously in his absence and suddenly went quite as soon as he appeared in the room pretending work on their whazols(This was the only object that Birklees had never allowed him to touch. One day when Walter had tried and opened it and had seen queer colors moving here and there, Professor Birklee appeared suddenly, glared at him but suppressed his indignant response when his wife had patted him on his shoulder) and their serious nature had always got him thinking, he felt an inexplicable love for the Birklees. It was seven o' clock in the evening and he was due to meet the Birklees at half past seven. He awoke from his oblivion and started collecting things that Birklees had asked him to get for the last night with them. They had planned that they would go over to a near by mountain and would sleep in the tent. (Specially designed by Walter again, by tying his bed sheets together and painting them with the color obtained by crushing leaves. Here his tent got astonishing recognition which Walter liked a lot.) They had planned to have food in the forest and the Birklees had said that they wanted to have an important talk with Walter.

Walter ascended the gentle slope of the mountain on which they were supposed to meet with the help of the two pointed sticks that he had made on his own. Very soon he saw two figures standing at a distance waiting for him. As he reached nearer he could see in the faint dusk that the Birklees were smiling brightly at him. He smiled back. Very soon they had put up the tent, started a fire and got themselves seated by the roaring fire. Professor Birklee looked at his wife. She nodded back.

Professor Birklee started “Walter, as you know that this is your last day at our residence, I want to tell you some things that you must know before you go to Plendisecort.” Walter felt extremely excited. He was going to know everything now. “With the knowledge I have given you about Sistros I believe that you will comfortably pass in language test. But there are many things that you do not know. I would rather say you know nothing yet about Sistrovios. I will first of all explain all the necessary things to you and then you may ask any question that comes to your mind.” Birklee said “Okay, well now I would start.” he said and again looked at his wife who nodded again. “You must know that the planet on which you are living is called Sistrovios. Our Sistrovios rotates around a big hot luminous body called Lom which gives us heat and light. That’s all that is discovered about Sistrovios’s external relations. I would now tell you about its internal affairs. You remember one day I told you about the Battle of Waterloo.” Walter nodded and Birklee continued, “Okay well, after this battle France started its domination on European countries. But this domination couldn’t last too long and the major powers like Britain, USA and Germany principally raised their head against the royal tyranny. This battle became so decisive that Europe was crumbled to a desert and all its population died. Terrible weapons were used in this battle which killed millions. Only some parts of the East could survive which became Galnovio. There was only one part initially but then travelers found a place very near to Galnovio which had better living conditions. People started migrating to this area. Initially it was declared as a part of Galnovio but after some time it got separated from Galnovio came to be known as Nesphereo. Nowadays, the leader of Nesphereo’s administration is Professor Mortati. Coming back to Galnovio’s affairs, it has only two minerals which are of vital utility for our people. First is magnet and the other is macil. Magnet found in Galnovio is different from the magnet found in Nesphereo because it has a far larger magnetic field and its effect can be felt for over one kilometer. Have you ever wondered why two carriages passing very closely from each other do not attract each other even when they both have a magnetic base?” Birklee asked. Walter realized for the first time that this was really mysterious. “I will tell you. There is a

property of magnets in Galnovio that magnets found together in the ore are the only ones which attract. They won't attract a magnet found from any other place. So whenever carriages are made they are made up of magnets found in the same area. Macil on the other hand is a strange element. It is found in the soil with a coating. As soon as this coating is removed macil becomes unstable and starts dissociating into large chunks. These chunks travel fast enough to hurt a human and are used for making macil guns which is Galnovio's most important weapon for defense, you see. "Secondly, Galnovio owes its existence principally to the trees which provide it with its basic needs.

"Going to Nesphereo, it is said that they have many minerals. One of them is the strong one, you see its very hard called iroon and a black stony thing called caol something which is principally used to make something called elektrikity." he mispronounced. He had lost his fluency and eloquence that he had when he was talking about Galnovio. Although Walter knew that Professor Birklee was talking about iron, coal and electricity, he never interrupted as he was absolutely forbidden to speak anything related to English.

"I don't know much about Nesphereo's internal affairs. As a matter of fact I am not supposed to know. I think that will do. You may ask questions now." he said and waited for a response from Walter.

"How do we get light even at night and what is in the lamps that are hung in my room?" Walter asked with utmost enthusiasm.

"It is the biggest gift of nature to the people of Galnovio. The only bird that resides in the Galnovio is finnili. Finnili flies from place to place and leaves behind its jiopy. Jiopy basically is a waste product for finnili but it is extremely useful for us. If once exposed to Lom for even half an hour, it can give light for over twelve hours, weird isn't it?" Birklee replied.

Walter kept on pondering over this reply and then recollecting his question bank, said "What is that thing that seems like a cubical box which opens to show strange colors rolling here and there?"

"You always felt anxious to know what whazol was, didn't you? I will tell you. Whazol is a device which is given to every teacher at Plendisecort to remain in track with the various schedules and programs. That is it helps us in remembering our classes, periods and the rest of stuff. The rolling colors form a pattern of alphabets in case there is some program or class that I am missing. Plendisecort is extraordinarily large, you see." He said animatedly. Walter was staring moodily into space, perhaps thinking very hard, trying hard to imagine Plendisecort and the working of the whazol.

“Anything else?” he said hopefully.

Walter merely grumped, “No.”

“Back to serious things now. Now, after this terrible battle that had destroyed everything of Europe, intelligent people thought that they must make a place where everything can be preserved and saved from misuse. By everything I mean ships, airplanes, guns, submarines, bombs, minerals, texts concerning production of all these things, English dictionaries, something called computers, mobiles, money and many more things. There aren’t exactly crores of things lying in that place but procedure to make all these things is kept in text form so that it can be used properly. This place is called Dulen. But to prevent it from falling into wrong hands these intelligent people kept everything in a very, very secure place. The security is such that no one till now has been able to pierce the Dulen. Many have dreamt but no one has ever succeeded in reaching it let alone see all these wonderful devices. It is said that there is one way in which the Dulen’s property can be made public but this way is unknown. The folks made only one map to reach the Dulen and handed it over to the people of Galnovio. But just some years ago it was stolen and could never be...er....reclaimed. Many people tried to enter the Dulen and get all the riches found in it but failed desperately as they never returned back. Nesphereo and Galnovio concluded something sort of a treaty that no one would enter the Dulen. This step was just taken to prevent the terrible loss of life which started taking place just after people got the text in which Dulen was publicized. No one has tried to enter the Dulen from over eight years now.” He stopped uncertainly and stared at Walter. Walter was lost in his own thoughts. He had grasped everything what Birklee had said but even then it seemed as an information avalanche on him. He wondered why the Birklees hadn’t told him all this earlier. He wondered where was their son and why did they go pale whenever he mentioned him. He couldn’t dare to ask them. Even though the Birklees had been very friendly to him, they had always maintained a distance from him which he felt at this moment.

Professor Birklee quietly approached him and held him in his arm. He enveloped Walter in his wide chest and whispered, “You would know.”

As if he had understood whatever Walter wanted to say to him! As if he had understood everything without Walter speaking a word! Walter stared at him. Birklee was smiling warmly at him. Mrs. Birklee joined them and held Walter in her ample bosom. They had an enjoyable dinner beside the fire in which Mrs. Birklee made Walter’s favorite dishes which Walter finished within a trifle of a second. They finally retired to bed in their tents after

cracking some jokes and gossiping. Even in this gossip time Walter didn't dare to ask anything about their son. They didn't care to tell him either. Walter closed his eyes thinking that there always was a fortune buried deep under the soil every time he shouted for food to his mother, there always were people trying to get this fortune every time he tore his bed sheets to make his tent.....

IV

“Hitchy Hitchy koo,
Where are you? ,
Why don’t you mew? ,
I will sue you,
Then why don’t you mew? ,
Hitchy Hitchy Koo,
Where are you? ……” Walter sung gleefully, once again, dancing in his tent.
“Where on Sistrovio are you, Walter?” shouted Seph Smit searching for Walter in every corner of their mansion.
“Galnovio.” Walter shouted back.
“Where on Galnovio?”
“34, Fryster Street.”
“Where are on 34, Fryster Street?” asked Seph Smit tiredly.
“Tent.” Walter said, skipping one of the words of his blessed rhyme. He had heard it when the Birklees had taken him to a poetic meet in the main town of Galnovio. It was sung by a young poet who was greatly admired by Walter.
“Walter at least now come out of your tent. We got to have lunch.” Seph Smit said approaching the tent.
“Mother, can we have lunch here, just for a change?” Walter said hopefully. Seph Smit, for the first time, considered the offer. She felt an indefinite love for her son when she looked at Walter’s eyes which made her accept the offer.
“Can you help in getting the dining table here, Walter?” Seph Smit said, picking up their wooden dining table. Walter felt honored at the idea of both of them having their lunch in his tent and helped his mother to arrange everything.
“Walter you remember, we have to go out this evening.” Seph Smit said, sitting beside Walter.
“Where?” Walter replied hurrying through his lunch.
“You have your entrance exam for Plendisecort today!” she said, horrified at the realization that Walter had prepared nothing to face the exam.
“I remember mother. I am a trifle nervous, that’s why I forgot it.” He said and finished his lunch within seconds.

“Morence knows how will you pass, Walter? I seem to loose my—” But her voice was drowned by Walter’s repetition of his blessed old poem.

After a wretched ride in their Ruell Vem in which most of the time Walter was craning over the coachman’s head to speed up, Walter and his mother stood in front the huge gate with Plendisecort written in golden letters at 24 Giopyt Street. Once again they entered the carved hall but this time Seph Smit didn’t go over to the reception. She rushed to one of the lanes which emerged from the main hall. The lane led them to a bigger hall which was full of children, all of Walter’s age. The hall was full of chatting, shrieking, screeching and howling which drowned the voice of a female teacher who was trying to address the children. All the children were with their parents and Walter convulsed with fear on seeing so many people in his native area. He had always thought that children of his age group were sparse in Galnovio but his opinion was contradicted when he saw such a crowd of kids all around him. Seph Smit held him tightly by his arm and they walked ahead to reach the teacher closer who seemed a kilometer away from their place. Walter saw many boys taller and healthier than himself and felt an impulse to run away from the place and sit in his tent. Many boys had murderous eyes and hefty shoulders which got him struggling to keep up with his mother who was comfortably walking ahead. His mother finally stopped when they were close enough to see the teacher’s face. She was short with closely cropped hair and a straight fringe across the forehead. Her face carried an irritated expression which made it difficult to imagine her face with a smile. Suddenly all the noises stopped when a tall old man came in the centre of the stage with a young man with extraordinary masculinity. Both of them looked great, knowledgeable people and their eyes glimmered with outpouring knowledge.

The old man looked up from his notebook which he carried in his hands and started speaking, “Good Evening everyone. I am Loric Hanison, professor of frozain at Plendisecort. I am really glad at the prospect of getting so many new faces at Plendisecort in this year’s annual entrance examination. We will see how many of these faces will be seen in the school finally.” He said, smiling wickedly “I request you all to kindly take out your magnetic attractors to get your numbers for your order of interviews.” He said and pushed the solid wall behind the stage. The wall slithered over, smoothly, to reveal another wall with lakhs of numbers written on magnetic slates. Walter eagerly looked at his mother who took out a flat black object from her purse and kept it down in her hand.

“At the count of three please.” said Loric Hanison looking at the big wall. “One....Two.....Three.” Everyone in the hall including Seph Smit put their attractors in front of them and the slates flew from the wall to their attractors just like little birds who rush to their mother after the first flying session. Walter looked at this flood of magnetic slates which rushed past his ear and head and he had to duck twice or thrice to prevent the slates from crashing on his face.

Seph Smit eagerly took out the number that had struck against her attractor. The same was done by the many people who were in the hall. She turned it over merrily but when she looked at the number, she froze with horror. Walter even went on his heels to look at the number but his mother’s height was just too much for him. On the slate one could clearly see “01” written in bolds. She showed the number to Walter who too froze to a large mass of ice as soon as he saw it. So it was distinct that he would be the first one to give the interview. He started feeling jolts in his stomach.

After everyone had seen their numbers, Loric Hanison said, “I hope you all have seen to your numbers. I now, request the first examinee to please step in the interview chamber.” He pointed towards a stair case which stood behind the stage. Walter looked up at his mother who put thumbs-up to encourage him and then looked at the stair case leading to the interview chamber. He walked slowly with short, nervous strides and observed that everyone was staring at him admiring his luck. He would gleefully give the number to whoever wanted it and would take the last number, he thought.

He ascended the stair case trying hard to regain his voice which he thought he had lost, all this time. As he climbed the last few stairs he could see a jury of learned Professors sitting on a wide desk. Although Walter didn’t observe it, this room was the best in Plendisecort base. It had deep high carvings with many flowers arranged beautifully on the walls which filled the room with a sweet fragrance. In the centre was hung a carved and painted jioy which enlightened the room.

Walter nervously approached the jury which was smiling at him. Walter tried to smile but couldn’t be too emphatic.

“Please sit down. What is your name, young man?” said one of the jury members beckoning him to a chair right in front of them.

Walter struggled to get back his voice and finally said, “My name is Walter Smit, sir.”

One of the members asked, “Alright Walter, What do you know about frozain?”

Walter for the first time had heard this word in use. He knew this word was in Sistros dictionary and he had even seen it. What did it mean? His mind

was working with its four fold speed trying to figure out what that word meant but nothing dawned upon him. He tried to break the letter into its constituents as Birklee had asked him to do in case who couldn't understand the word. The word was made up of Fro- and zain. Fro- meant the study of something and zain meant present. In that case, did frozain mean the study of present? He wondered.

After many complicated debates and arguments within him, Walter said diffidently, "It is the study of the present sir."

The professor looked closely at him and then smiled. When Walter stared at this professor he recognized it immediately. How very different he was looking! It was no one else but Professor Birklee without the mask. His face was absolutely spotless and wasn't battered as Walter thought it was. Walter smiled at Birklee but he showed no signs of recognition and simply stared at his notebook.

"Good. Well now, what do you think should the relationships be like, between Galnovio and Nesphereo?" suddenly, said another member perturbing Walter's reverie.

Walter pondered over this question. When Professor Birklee had told him about Nesphereo, there was a hint of hatred and venom in his voice which surely meant that he hated Nesphereo. Did that mean that Nesphereo wasn't a good place to live in or was it that the people of Galnovio were simply jealous of them as they had more resources than Galnovio? Whatever the reason may be, Galnovio hated Nesphereo. Then they must fight each other and end their existence, he thought.

"Sir I think that we should have a war." said Walter finally. All the jury members started laughing at this reply.

"Can war be a solution?" said a member still chuckling. Walter couldn't find a reason why they all were laughing as he had given his reply with utmost sincerity and honesty. Was his reply wrong, or right? He wondered.

"Sir I think that if we can't manage things with friendship then the only path left is to resort to war." Walter openly said what he felt. Once again the hall burst into laughter.

"Young man, we are inferior to Nesphereo in weapons and defense. We only have the macil gun which is far more inferior to their machine guns and bombs. Okay, if we are talking about war, do you know anything about Wellizen?" asked a member.

Walter had no idea whatsoever what that word meant. He tried to remember every word that Professor Birklee had taught him but Wellizen was certainly not one of them. He even tried the dissociation technique but Wellizen broke to make two meaningless words.

"I don't know sir." Walter said quietly looking down at the floor.

"It's okay young man. Just for your information, Wellizen is the fighting technique of Galnovio in which we use the radiation layer of our body that Morence has gifted us." said Birklee showing no signs of identification.

"You may go." said a member who was sitting in the centre.

Was it over? Had he done it? Where should he go? Walter thought. A peon came up to him and solved his difficulty. He led Walter to a dimly lit corridor and said, "You would be getting the result within five minutes. Just wait here. I will get your mother." With that he departed.

Walter stood in the corridor thinking that it had been much easier then he had thought it would be. The jury was very frank and friendly. He started thinking of Wellizen. Although he hadn't understood the member's description of Wellizen, he had reckoned that it had something to do with fighting. It must be taught at Plendisecort, he thought. He felt a sudden urge to learn it.

But then a bigger thought struck him. Would he pass? Would he join Plendisecort or would he just spend his lifetime in his tent repeating his poem over and over again.

His mother came pacing towards him. As she came closer, Walter saw that her face carried a worried and impatient look which couldn't be hidden by the smile which she was trying to wear on her lips.

"How did it go?" Seph Smit asked, hopeful of a positive reply.

"It was good. I just couldn't answer one question." Walter said with a smile.

Soon the peon came up with a letter in his hand.

He said, "This is from the jury madam. Here is his requirements list." and he handed over two crisp leaves in Seph Smit's hand.

"Does that mean he has passed?" asked Seph Smit enthusiastically. The peon nodded, "Oh! Walter you have made it. You are a cadet of Plendisecort now, Walter. Oh! I am so glad. I am so very proud." She had picked Walter in her arms and Walter was sitting on her shoulder. He too was glad at his quick responsiveness and wittiness.

"Well let us see what the jury has the written about you Walter." And she landed Walter on his feet and opened the jury's letter.

From the jury,

We want to congratulate you at your son's open mindedness and straight forwardness. We could well make out (as we all know Wellizen) what he was thinking about and how his mind was working and we are glad to inform you that your son took a logical standpoint in every question that we put up to him. Although we found his brain in a terrible lack of knowledge, he put his knowledge to the maximum possible use. We therefore request you to please tell your ward all the necessary things that he needs to know at his age before coming to Plendisecort.

Walter looked at his mother who finished reading and smiled at Walter. Walter didn't take the trouble of asking what it said as he felt hungry as well as tired. Seph Smit held Walter's hand and led him to a big bridge which stretched over the big hall in which so many children could be seen below. Walter walked over this bridge, looking down at so many children who were left to be interviewed. He felt like saying, "Take it easy." to them when he saw many children with worried expressions.

"Mother, does one get an admission in Plendisecort for free after he has qualified the interview?" Walter asked, as the thought struck him.

"No. One has to pay the fees. You don't need to worry about that. I will be going out to buy your stuff and everything tomorrow. You stay at home and rest." said Seph Smit, patting Walter's back.

Mrs. Smit was sitting in her Ruell Vem lost in her own field of thoughts. Her thoughts loitered from Walter's health to Walter's school life to Walter's prosperity. She felt a sharp desire to be with his son. The Ruell Vem came to a sudden halt.

The coachman said, "Madam we have reached Marane Street."

She got out of the carriage asking the coachman to wait for an hour or so. A narrow alley led her to a colony with many low slum like houses. In this crowd of slums Mrs. Smit seemed to know exactly where she had to go. She turned right and knocked on a half battered door which had sticks dangerously protruding from it at odd angles. There was no name plate on the door but Mrs. Smit confidently stood in front of it. Loric Hanison, the same man who had addressed the people in the Plendisecort's entrance interview emerged from behind the door.

"Welcome Seph. I am very glad that Walter made it. Very glad indeed. All thanks to you!" He said, inviting Seph inside. The drawing room was dimly lit and there was no order in it whatsoever. Books lay in a confused heap and the sofa covers were patched. It clearly seemed that the resident was either living in penury or was in a hiding. Mrs. Smit smiled feebly and seated herself on an arm chair. Even though her face was animated in smile, her eyes looked grey which clearly showed that something was troubling her.

"Loric, I know he has made it and I am glad that he has made it but even then I am sad. Not because he is going away from me but because of this letter that the jury specially sent me. She took out the letter from her purse and handed it over to Loric Hanison. He quietly read it and kept staring at the ceiling for some time.

“I think they are right, Seph. He is ought to know things now.” Loric said looking into Mrs. Smit’s eyes.

“Do you mean to say that we should tell him everything about his past and all that?” Seph said, appalled.

“No. Of course not Seph. But things like his planet, his language, his location et cetera must be told to him. Does he know nothing at all? How did he pass the exam th—”

“He knows, Loric. He knows all that but he does not know anything about his family. You must know that I am ought to go to Nesphereo now. My husband is living there for over five years now, you know Loric.” Seph Smit said and started crying silently. Loric Hanison quietly approached her and put his arm around her.

“You can go after he starts with his term, Seph. I will take care of him. Moreover you know, once he gets into the atmosphere of Plendisecort he won’t miss you too much. There is Birklee, Professor Harles and me to take care of him, Seph. You don’t need to worry. But you must wait until his term starts. When the time will come, I will tell him everything about his family too, Seph. ” he said.

Seph Smit got up, releasing herself from Loric’s arms and said, dabbing her eyes, “I must go. Got to get Walter’s stuff. I understand what you mean, Loric. I will try and be patient. See you soon.”

“Believe in Morence. Whatever he does, he does for the best.” Loric said, approaching the door and smiled. Seph Smit smiled back and disappeared down the circuitous alley.

V

“Have you got your slippers, Walter?” asked Mrs. Smit. Walter stood at the other side of Mrs. Smit’s bed, packing his luggage. He was wearing a blue shirt with ‘Plendisecort’ written in golden letters on the right hand side. His trousers were loose and there was a negligible shade of blue in them. His dark blue cloth-made overcoat lay tidily on the bed.

“I just kept it mother.” He said quietly. For the first time he seemed a bit dull and reluctant. As a matter of fact, he was sad at the prospect of going away from his mother. *I am going to a solitary place which has lots of mad caps like me*, he thought. The field was not as green as he had thought it would be. Although, everyone around him was glad at the prospect of his selection in Plendisecort, he seemed oddly reluctant.

“We would first go to the mall. You can get whatever you like from there. Then we would go to the Galnovio *wagarasca*. We will enjoy there for some time and I think by that time we will be in time to catch your ARV scheduled to go at 5 P.M.” Seph Smit said, trying to enthuse to her son who seemed lost.

“Yes Mother.” Walter said indifferently. He quietly closed the suitcase, put it on the floor and wore his overcoat. He and Seph Smit mounted the Ruell Vem and started for the mall.

The mall was the second most beautiful place in Galnovio, the most beautiful being the Galnovio *wagarasca*. The mall stretched to an astonishing two kilometers in a crescent shape. It’s all wood composition made it look like a giant castle with two giant wings stretched out in mid air. These two giant wings were nothing but a show-off of inexplicable architecture which stationed the security troops which took care of the mall. This mall’s architecture was designed by the best architect in Galnovio who lived a decade ago. The giant wing’s firmness was ensured by the magnets which repelled the magnet placed precisely below the wing and maintained a constant distance from it.

Their Ruell Vem cruised in front of the mall where they both got down. Walter had preferred to keep quite throughout the journey much to Mrs. Smit’s astonishment. After passing through two security gates, they reached a series of shops lined side by side to infinity. Walter walked lazily, his eyes lingering on every receding toy. The giant wooden horse, the royal tiger

sitting majestically, the mini Ruell Vem specially made for children, the jumping ground where one could jump as much as one wanted as the ground threw one higher in the air than one's original jump, the toy Ciriuz (the royal Ruell Vem only used by high Government officials) and foldable tent which just looked like a small piece of cloth but stretched to a big tent as soon as one pulled a rope, received the same lingering and then walking ahead from Walter. Seph Smit insisted Walter to buy every toy which she observed Walter showed interest in, but Walter didn't seem to be in a mood of shopping.

After some loitering, Seph Smit held Walter's hand and stalked out of the mall, irritated by her son's refusal of her every offer. Once again their Ruell Vem skidded through the snow covered surroundings and after a quiet ride of about fifteen minutes, reached the Galnovio *wagarasca*.

This spot was the pride of all Galnovians and the envy of every Nespherean. This was the only place made of something other than wood. It was a very ancient building and was the lone survivor of the all-destructive war. To call this place merely building will surely be an underestimate as this place was much more than building. There were two giant towers which stood at the either side of a central bigger tower. The central tower had large staircases which led one to the terrace which was extraordinarily huge as well as high. Whole of the Galnovio could be seen from the top including the giant mall building which seemed miniature from here. Ruell Vems seemed as toy cars running here and there and people looked like ants searching for food. The Galnovian scientists had spent wretched ten years trying to figure out what the tower was made of to give it such an extraordinary strength and whether that material was found on Galnovio but had desperately failed in the attempt.

This was the lone place which yielded interest from Walter. He ran, ascending the spiral staircase, holding his mother's hand who was trying hard to keep up with the pace of her son. Many people like them considered the *wagarasca* a spot to release all stress and get ready for another tiresome working day. They reached the terrace within seconds owing to Walter's lightening speed and peered down at the wide expanse. This place was even considered as a holy one as it was said that this was where Morence had attained the state of perpetual meditation.

Seph Smit and Walter sat on the chairs put on the terrace just for the tourists and rejoiced the ultimate glory of the place. Seph Smit started thinking of the meeting that she had had with Loric Hanison the day before. *Loric will not be a teacher to Walter in the first year. How will he keep in touch with*

Walter then? And what about the lack of knowledge that the jury had mentioned? I must tell him something, she thought.

“Walter, do you know what is a year and how many months constitute a year?” Seph Smit asked Walter who was eagerly looking down.

“Year what? Month what?” Walter asked.

“I will tell you. Year is a period of seven months namely Ryjat, Baruak, Archam, Shirel, Kytim, Berina and Megreb. Ryjat, Baruak, Archam and Shirel are months of winter. Although snow falls throughout the year in Sistrovius but it is regular and extreme in these four months. Kytim is said to be best month of the year as it is neither very cold nor too hot in this month. Berina and Megreb are months of considerable summer in which the snow begins to melt but even before it can melt to form ivel, months of winter start. Each month is of 36 days, you see Walter. Each day has thirty two hours and sixteen o’ clock is called midnight. Try and learn the names. You were scheduled to go to Plendisecort on the 32nd of Megreb and that means that today is the 32nd of Megreb.” Seph Smit said, tenderly.

Walter took some time in learning the names of these months but he showed some enthusiasm which till now was absent from his behavior. He learnt them by repeating them over and over again and asked his mother to correct him every time he made a mistake.

Mrs. Smit turned her wrist to look at the watch which was very odd indeed. There was a dial in the watch but there were no hands. She extended her hand at put it front of the shining Lom. A rod which was attached at a specific angle, caste its shadow over the dial between the numbers four and five when sixteen was written in the center top of the watch.

“Oh! My Marence, Walter it’s four thirty already. We must rush.” She started, suddenly holding Walter’s hand and running down the staircase to the floor level. They flew in their Ruell Vem, gasping for breath. It took them twenty five minutes to reach 24, Giopyt Street. (Once again the coachman’s neck was being craned to speed up but this time not by Walter but by Seph Smit) They rushed through the main hall to the launch pad. The ARV was ready. It stood on the floor just like an enormous bird ready for flight. Walter’s suitcase and trunk was put in a separate luggage ARV. Many children could be seen all around the launch pad bidding farewell to their parents. Walter could see many familiar faces which he had seen in the entrance interview but it was just that, at that time they had a panicking expression and now, a blissful expression.

“So, Walter, I would just say, take care of yourself. Make friends and enjoy. I would be sending you letters regularly. You must reply or I will be

worried. Inform me of the date when your term ends, alright.” Seph Smit gently pushed Walter in the ARV.

Walter wondered how the hell would his mother write him letters and how the hell would he reply. He didn’t know any such device through which two people separated by a distance of twenty kilometers could contact without seeing each other personally.

Walter sat on the last seat in the Ruell Vem looking sadly at his mother who was standing outside waving brightly at him. There was a fat fellow sitting at one side and another fat fellow on the other side. Walter felt squeezed between the two giants but he didn’t realize it until a low whistle crackled his ears and the Aerial Ruell Vem started rising. He looked despairingly down at his mother who was still waving brightly at him. He waved back. *I would be writing letters regularly to you*, she had said. He continued to look down until she became out of sight and then put his head in hands. He didn’t feel like crying but it was a rapture of feelings that he had never felt before for his mother.

“I have heard that the way to Plendisecort is beautiful.” said a boy sitting in front of Walter talking to the boy sitting next to him. Walter looked down to see if the boy was right. The boy was definitely right. They were cruising through a series of snow capped mountains which glimmered under the effect of the setting Lom. Walter noticed the many houses which could be seen at the foot of a mountain. He immediately recognized Professor Birklee’s residence. He was the only person whom Walter knew in Plendisecort but his unresponsiveness in his interview had disappointed Walter. Moreover, why did he wear his mask and why wasn’t he wearing it during his interview, Walter wondered. Walter’s thinking loitered from Professor Birklee to the enormous lake which could be seen below serenely welcoming the new comers at Plendisecort. A mightier sight moved his attention from the lake. They had hardly crossed the lake when they saw a very big idol made up of carved ice of a man whom Walter didn’t recognize. But his earnest expression, the glow of knowledge on his face, his tall and masculine frame and moreover the skilful carving by which it was made greatly influenced Walter. The idol was over fifty meters and its hand was stretched to a greater ten meters. Its hand pointed towards the sky and its eyes too looked hopefully towards the sky. Walter wondered how could one reach to the very end of the idol’s hand to carve it. He gasped with amazement. A similar buzz of stupefaction could be heard throughout the ARV.

The ARV passed beside the idol’s waist going very closely which even made some girls shriek. From the very beginning of the journey Walter had

started noticing that girls were senseless creatures. The way they sung songs as if they were going for a picnic, the way they laughed with silly feminine outlook, the way their silken hair flew and irritated the boys who sat behind them with prurience and even the way they spoke got on Walter's nerves. His reverie was disturbed when their ARV reached the signpost with PLENDISECORT written in golden letters. But even there, they could see no beautiful, glorious and huge Plendisecort buildings which they all had imagined. Surprisingly enough the Ruell Vem started descending at this blind spot. Nothing could be seen except tall mountains standing proudly at a distance. The ARV landed with a bang and doors clicked open.

Students started getting down and were assembled in lines by the staff members who stood on the same place. Walter too got done wondering what the hell was happening.

"Where the hell are we?" he asked a boy standing behind him.

"Of course we are in Plendisecort." He said chuckling to his friends who started chuckling along with him. Walter turned despairingly away from them and started looking for a person who could answer his question as it felt quite mortifying to him standing in the midst of a snow desert.

"I know. The buildings of Plendisecort are not exactly what we call buildings." said a boy next to him in another line. "Can you see those mountains?" he said pointing at the nearest mountains which could be seen in the infinity of mountains. Walter nodded.

"That is Plendisecort's main building. If one has normal eyesight one can even see the windows." He said sarcastically. Walter could certainly see the mountain and the windows. All his imagination of majestic halls and imperial castle was shattered.

"Oh! I must say it does not look good. I had imagined something far better."

Walter said turning at the boy who seemed a know-it-all.

"It is not that bad from the inside. Actually it's hollowed from inside to make the main hall. You will see. My father is a Professor here. That's how I know." said the boy.

Walter gasped in wonder at the boy's last statement. *Hollowed out? You must be kidding. How very impossible it is to hollow a mountain made up of rocks, so hard that they cannot even be crushed by the strongest tool in the world!* he thought.

"Silence please. Please wait until the next ARV comes. All the children will be taken further together." said the same woman who was trying to address the crowd during the interview initially.

Walter tried to get familiar with the boy who had told him every thing.

"Hello, my name is Walter Smit."

“My name is Donal Mosbee.” said the boy. “Oh! I am so glad that I got a friend. I thought I wouldn’t get one till the very end.” he said with a sudden change of tone. He now sounded from indifferent to enthusiastic. Walter looked at Donal and started observing his physical appearance. Physically this boy was something between fat and healthy. He was shorter than Walter and had long hair neatly combed backwards. Walter on the other hand had short hair with a fringe resting obliquely over his forehead which could never be combed aside even after Mrs. Smit’s numerous tries.

Walter’s attention was snatched by the upcoming ARV, bringing the next lot of children which appeared in Donal’s background. Walter now observed how slowly the ARV traveled, allowing its passengers to gasp at every sight of wonder which passed a by. Walter had become hyper sensitive to observe everything that was around him as there was so much to look at and he only had two eyes which could only look at one thing at a time. He now observed the place where he was standing. This place was just a minor part of the infinite snow desert which stretched to endlessness. Just some meters ahead one could see a huge bay before the School Mountains, which looked just like a mirage in the dusk. The ARV landed and another hundred of children hurriedly arranged themselves in lines.

“Now, listen to me all of you. Your journey from here to Plendisecort is a short but a sharp one. By sharp, I mean steep. You have to use the sifters which, I think you all must have purchased.” said a professor which Walter had never seen before. All of them took out their sifters and started walking through the knee deep snow on a fairly steep foothill.

“Why don’t they get some vehicle to get us transported from there to the main hall? Gosh! I am dead tired.” said Donal to Walter who was loving this tracking. He had reached to the entrance much before the others.

Walter gave a helping hand to Donal who really seemed frustrated. Walter was pulling Donal up when his eye fell upon a girl who seemed equally agitated. Walter stared at her face and felt a sudden thunder in his chest. *She is beautiful, she is really very beautiful. Perhaps Morence gave girls looks but forgot to give them some brains,* he thought. The girl looked up at him and colored slightly. *Perhaps she needs help,* he thought.

“Go for it!” said Donal noticing that Walter was looking unblinkingly at the girl. Accordingly, Walter extended his hand for help. The girl held it with a smile and ascended the gradient. His outreach led him to help everyone who was finding it difficult to ascend up the slope including many fat girls and boys.

Once more they assembled in front of the main hall. (This of course was a hollowed mountain.) From here, one could see a series of parallel mountains

everywhere where one could possibly see. There was a myriad of high and low mountains stretching to a vast area just like billions of stars that one could see on a spotless night.

The teachers guided them to the Main entrance. As a matter of fact there was nothing special about his main entrance. It was just a small door at the foot of a mountain. *I am entering in a mountain*, Walter thought. The thought was really creepy. One by one they entered the hall. The hall was completely dark and Walter could only see the silhouette of fellow first years running desperately here and there searching for a crowd less spot in the hall. When, finally calm succeeded chaos, the hall fell completely silent. *What now? We all have get places to stand, pranksters! Get some light!*, Walter thought as he moved an inch left and almost toppled over something big which stood on stands.

“Why aren’t they getting some light?” asked Walter to Donal who had kept close to him owing to Walter’s quick movement and athletic nature.

“Just wait and watch!” Donal said excitedly.

Suddenly Walter’s eyes caught the nearest light. It was in the extreme left side of the hall. For some time Walter stared at the light. It was dim yet. Suddenly the light in that side of the hall increased. All eyes rotated towards the same side and a big bird twinkling with something bright on its body flew and enlightened the big hall with blazing lights. The hall burst with applaud. The bird flew right till the top where the breadth of the hall decreased and there, led out the sweetest voice that Walter had ever heard. It rapidly moved its wings and the things from which the light had come started falling down. The bird landed after shedding all its jiopy and a teacher led it out of the hall.

All first years started jumping to catch one. Walter though, thought that it was stupid.

“Try and catch one Walter. Jiopy would give you light even in your dormitory.” Donal said jumping higher and higher to get at least one. Owing to his tall and lean frame, Walter caught two jiopy and gave one to Donal who hadn’t got even one.

Now that the hall was flooded with light Walter observed that the things which were acting as obstacles for the first years were jiopy stands. Light emanated in all directions from these stands. Walter observed the wall’s interiors and found them extraordinary. The hall didn’t look at all like a hollowed mountain now. It looked like a royal palace. The rocks were first of all very smooth and were carved and painted with organic colors. One could clearly see the same man, whose ice carved statue was made, carved in the stone, fighting some foe. First year children had got the ground floor of

the hall to get seated. Second year children could be seen above, their seats arranged circuitously twenty foot above the ground level. The third year, fourth year and the fifth year children sat at increasing heights. Walter wondered how the fifth years must be feeling, looking at the hall from such a great height, looking at tiny children moving here and there just like ants. Just in front of the fifth years, equally high, was the teachers seating corridor. Walter's biggest amazement was that there were no staircases to reach the teacher's corridor or the fifth year's seats. They were just hung high over a height. *Is one supposed to jump over this distance? No it was just too much to be jumped*, Walter thought. Walter's stupor was disturbed when he saw that a very young and masculine man had got up and was probably arranging for addressing them. The man had broad shoulders with a military chest and mountainous biceps.

"Good Evening everyone!" he said very silently but as soon as the first note man of the man's voice emanated from his voice box, the hall fell awkwardly silent. "For the first years, I am Professor Harles Loryet, professor of Wellizen. I welcome all of you on behalf of staff, to Plendisecort for starting another great year, dedicated once more to-" he said waiting for all the students to say it together.

"Professor Eugene Mosbee." All the second years and the students of higher years shouted together. This seemed to bring a smile on Professor Harles' face.

"My great granddad!" Donal said excitedly.

"For the first years, I must tell you that Professor Mosbee was the sole founder of Plendisecort. You all must have seen the ice statue on the way. It's of Professor Mosbee. We dedicate every year to the protection and upliftment of Plendisecort. So all first years, you must be understanding what is your sole responsibility?" All first years nodded.

"Now I think we must start the feast. It's time to fill our palate everyone!" Professor Harles said and sat down, smiling, beside Loric Hanison.

Walter all this time was lost in looking at Professor Harles' well toned body. For the second time he had heard the word Wellizen. *It was some fighting skill. Professor Harles teaches it so he is ought to be a healthy man*, he thought. Big tables appeared brought by strong men. Walter stared at the men who were carrying the tables.

"They are all albinos." Donal said eating his apple tart. He really seemed to know everything. Walter felt rather afraid of these people and riveted his sight on the teacher's wing.

"Which one is your father?" asked Walter looking up.

“The one in extreme left.” He pointed towards a lousy man with white beard and long side locks. “He teaches cultural studies.”

As usual, Walter had hurried through his dinner and had completed the sweet dish along with the main course within seconds.

“How many subjects do we have?” Walter asked, irritated by the knowledge of another subject.

“Basically we have five subjects namely Frozain, cultural studies, Sistros, biology-the most boring of the lot, and Physics. But we may have Wellizen too. It changes from year to year.”

Now people were starting to end their feasts and Walter was cursing the people who hadn't, till now.

As soon as everyone in the hall finished with the feasts, Professor Harles got on his feet.

“There are a few announcements that I want to make. The classes for the first years will be started from tomorrow. Wellizen is also included in your curriculum this term. Your dormitories will be told just now. Whosoever feels interested to play Stiphel, may contact their house masters. The global cup will start from the 1st of Archam. Skiing tournament will be included in the Global Cup. People interested must contact their house wardens.....That will do. Before we say good night we must produce our school rhythm. Everyone pick up whatever you may lay your hands on. ”

Everyone picked up something including Walter who could only find a spoon. Everyone started striking their instruments with anything that they found and after some moments of cacophonous hullabaloo, the instruments made a very recognizable rhythm and tune. The hall echoed with the sounds of the various instruments. Professor Harles had picked up nothing but still seemed to produce the maximum sound. At last every one gave a final burst of music and the hall burst into applause.

“That will do. You may go to your dormitories. Have a very good night.” Professor Harles said.

The second years and the students of higher years got up, took out a magnet and jumped down. The repelling power of magnet slowed down their descent and they safely landed on the floor. Teachers did the same. The hall suddenly felt crowded. The teachers led the first years outside the hall where they all assembled. All the other students entered small tunnels which started just in front of the hall and disappeared within. Loric Hanison addressed the first years after all the crowd had gone.

“Students, to select your dormitories, we would do something that would be easy as well as justifiable.” He showed a chit box. “The same you think. You got to pick up a chit and go to the respective tunnels.”

Walter looked at three tunnels whose door was painted in red, brown and green. On the red door was written in capital letters—“RUBLUS”, on the brown door—“BURLINO” and on the green door—“GURSLED”.

One by one, students came, tore a chit open and entered the respective tunnels. Donal’s chance came and he got into Rublus. He held up thumbs up towards Walter and disappeared down the tunnel. Walter’s chance finally came. He tore open the chit and stared at it. Burlino was written in capital letters on it. Walter went in the brown tunnel in utter dejection as he was not in the dormitory in which his only friend was.

VI

“Oh! You worry not about that. I will ask my father to get you in Rublus. Nevertheless, how is your dormitory?” Donal asked walking with Walter to their cultural studies class.

“Bad. Well, will your father really do so? He does not know me.” Walter said taking out the magnet that had been given to him just a day ago.

“But you know me and I know you. I think that is all that matters.” Donal said doing the same.

They now stood on the ground floor in the School Mountains and they could clearly see the class a floor above.

“I feel really strange doing it. What if I bang on to the big magnetic plate?” Walter said stopping uncertainly in front of the dive plate.

“Go on. Come on don’t worry. Just don’t forget to flip the magnet before landing. Will you go first or do you want me to do it first?” said Donal patting Walter.

“Do you guys mind if I do it before you. I am a bit nervous.” said a boy approaching them. He really looked very pale and nervous.

“Sure.” said Donal and Walter simultaneously.

“Nice to meet you folks. I am Spencer Yerascott, in Rublus.” He said extending his hand.

Walter and Donal gave their introduction one by one and chatted for some time. Spencer then put his magnet right in front of him on the dive pad. A sudden force pulled him upwards, so fiercely that within a blink of the eye, he had crashed into the magnetic plate. Walter put his magnet in front him to help Spencer who was howling with pain. Once again a fierce force pulled him. The force was so flabbergasting that Walter felt that he would crash right into the giant plate. But his reflex action seemed much faster than Spencer as he turned his magnet at the very correct time when he was about to crash and felt a sudden repelling force and landed on the plate on the first floor very safely. Then he pushed Spencer up but his magnet didn’t come out even after they both they applied their combined force.

“I will have to get a new one. Morence knows what will happen of this one.” He said when he was safe in the classroom. Donal came cruising in and attended to Spencer. The classroom was empty excepting few girls who sat in the front seats, gossiping. Spencer, Walter and Donal took the last seat as

they shared common views of hatred towards girls. *It had been easier and enjoyable*, Walter thought. Now that he had got friends and Donal had said that he will get Walter transferred in Rublus, Walter felt complete although yesterday night he had been crying all night missing his mother and regretting his behavior of defying her orders. The class started filling with the passage of time. At eleven o'clock, Professor Mosbee appeared.

"Good morning everyone. I am Professor Ronald Mosbee. I will be teaching you cultural studies." Said he, silently. Donal beamed.

"There are a few rules that you must learn while you are in my class. First thing, I cannot tolerate any disturbance when I am speaking. So who so ever wants to disturb me may get out right now. I won't complain neither would I say anything." He waited, looking at everyone. No one looked like getting up. So he continued, "Second thing, if ever you have any doubt, you must get up and ask me then and there. Last thing, I don't want you to open your textbooks while I am speaking. You may read them in your spare time. This is all practical. We are here to discuss the intricate delicacies related with our culture and our past." He stopped allowing all of this to sink in.

"Today we will discuss Plendisecort's origin. You must write down the important points quickly. I think all of you know about the Dulen." Everyone nodded. "Now, fifty years ago, just after the terrible war, the Dulen was made. It stretches to an astounding area of about ten thousand square kilometer. Now, aware of its size the people who made the Dulen were not stupid enough to keep only the documents and no material. Tell me can you produce a toy until you have wood? Of course not." said he answering his own question. "I simply mean to say that the wise people left models or small quantities of everything that they dumped. Second of all, all of you know that leaves are the only things by which something can be written in Galnovio and you also know that leaves are biodegradable. So, they must have made something to write on or must have preserved the leaves itself in some no air and no moisture place. You agree?" he asked. Everyone nodded. "Now to explain all this and also to simplify the entry in the Dulen, the wise men made documents in which everything about the secrets of Dulen were told. They stored these documents in one of the serats, which is our worshipping place. To be more precise they kept the documents in the wagaras serat. Now I would tell you something about the wagaras serat. This is most ancient place, said to be over two hundred years old. It survived the terrible war. This place, of course, before the formation of Galnovio was something called a 'church'. Perhaps it was the worshipping center of the ancient people. The wagaras serat still exists in Galnovio main town. Now in this serat these wise people made something called a trapdoor

apparently invisible. If I start explaining you how people entered this trapdoor, I would go on for days and days together. So, I would jump on. You must now remember that there were two parties in play- Galnovio and Nesphereo out of which both were ambitious to get the Dulen's riches. Nesphereans now provided to be the hindrance for Galnovio to get the riches. Nesphereans proclaimed that they had as much right as Galnovio to get the revealing documents as they too, were a part of Galnovio some years ago. Nesphereo's proclamation and the Galnovio's demurrer thereto created war clouds. It certainly seemed imminent. Twenty seven years ago, on the 32nd of Megreb, Nespherean troops stormed into Galnovio. Galnovio's macil guns seemed childish in front of their advanced weapons of warfare. They entered the Galnovio's borders with ease and started moving towards wagaras serat. Galnovians knew that they could not give the texts to Nesphereans under any chance. It was then that Professor Harles Loryet's grandfather decided to make Wellizen, public and teach it to the common people to defend their country. Eugene Mosbee was Professor Loryet's very good friend and they together made a society called The Halvins literally meaning the people of Morence. Both these people came to be known as the leaders as they both were the masters of Wellizen. Professor Loryet and Eugene Mosbee made an excellent army and defended the wagaras. Nesphereans were in shreds, hungry and powerless. They were forced to sign a treaty with Galnovio. According to it, Galnovio got the complete the possession of the sacred texts. At this Eugene Mosbee was very glad and proposed the idea of forming a school which would train children to protect their country to Professor Loryet. Professor Loryet loved this idea and started the construction of Plendisecort. They knew that it will need a very huge area. So, they hollowed the mountains to utilize that area with the help of their Wellizen skills and Plendisecort's royal campus. Just some years ago, after the Dulen's texts were made public, many people started attempting to get into it and get the riches but they all failed desperately even after the helping texts excavated from wagaras serat. So, to prevent this loss of property and life, Nesphereo and Galnovio signed treaty preventing people to enter the Dulen without the permission of the nation they lived in." he finally stopped. The class was extraordinarily silent and sat straight as if under a spell. The story was so interesting, so spell bounding and yet so real, every one thought. And even after such a good explanation of everything the question remained, what was Wellizen? How was it so strong so as to defeat the bullets? The question came lurking in Walter's mind who was also spell bounded by the extraordinary story. Walter looked at Spencer and Donal who just as him were lost in the mists of the pasts. Another question was

striking everybody like lightening, what those wise people did, that now their own men can't open the secret place. What was the thing that was guarding the place and how come that no one, absolutely no one could pierce the Dulen? The shrieking bell awoke every one from their reverie.

"You must know that every word that I said was truth, no fairy tale. Have a good day." said Professor Mosbee and strolled out of the room.

After the flabbergasting cultural studies class, all the first years moved relentlessly towards the Biology class. This was the least interesting class for Walter and many shared this view. When they entered the classroom which was on the same floor as the cultural studies class, they saw a lady teacher already in, making something on the board.

"Students I am Professor Polly Brown, teacher for biology." said the lady in a shaky voice.

"OK. Let us start straight away. Lots of syllabus needed to be completed. Open the first chapter in your books-Skin." Her voice was feeble and monotonous and invited somnolence which could clearly be seen on many faces including Walter's. She talked about the outer most layers named something that Walter didn't hear and continued to lecture about many layers of the skin found in the body. *How many layers does one have*, Walter thought irritated by the extraordinary length of the class.

"What do you suppose must be the thing that is guarding the Dulen?" whispered Walter to Donal who seemed equally irritated by the class, his thoughts wondering in the same direction.

"Perhaps a four headed creature or a solid wall." Donal said from the corner of his mouth.

"Whatever it is must be extraordinary—"

"Master Walter Smit, can you please tell me which is the outermost radiation layer of our skin." shot Professor Polly Brown noticing the whispering boys on the last seat. A sudden chill arose within Walter. *Did the teacher take my name? Am I supposed to answer this question?* He thought, his mind racing faster than the Ciriuz. The whole class was staring at him including the girl whom he had helped a day ago. Walter got up and kept thinking for some time. He stared the girl who was staring back at him. *Was she trying to say something? Yes definitely she was trying to say something. But what?* , Walter thought looking at the girl's lips. *Fres- what?* All this time Polly Brown was awaiting his reply and was staring at the textbook.

"Madam it is called Freswer." Walter finally said reading the girl's lips to perfection.

Professor Brown looked up, "Couldn't you give this answer earlier? Right though, I must ask you to pay better attention in class." She said and resumed her lessons. Walter's image about girls too underwent a change. *Girls are good looking things with enough brains*, he grinned to himself. He felt a sudden urge to thank the girl who had just saved him from a mortifying situation. The bell shrieked giving the message that the period was over. Walter's heart thumped. *Wellizen class*, he thought. But a bigger problem lurked about him- thank the girl. Even Donal insisted on it. So Walter quietly approached the girl who always the last one to leave the class.

"Excuse me. I just wanted to thank you....er.....for helping me." Walter said going over to her seat. Donal and Spencer stood at a distance giving encouragement to Walter at regular intervals.

"Oh! It's fine. I owed you one. Well I am Betty Hig. Friends?" she said with a pleasing smile, extending her hand.

"Oh! Well. Yes sure. I am Walter Smit. Nice to meet you." Walter said accepting her hand. As the warmth of her hand fell in Walter's hand, he felt a lurch in his stomach. Their eyes interlocked. They kept staring at each other for some time.

"We must be getting on, Betty. It's Wellizen, presided over by Professor Loryet." said Donal from a distance. Betty suddenly became self conscious and hurried out of the room, blushing.

"You know her!" Walter said, a trifle disconcerted by Donal's secrecy of this fact.

"I am sorry I didn't tell you. You will have to accept that we didn't get time. She is my childhood friend, lived in my locality." Donal said wrapping his arm around Walter.

"There must be many things that you have not told me. When do you plan to tell me?" Walter said indignantly.

"Tonight you will be in Rublus. So we all will sit in the leisure room and gossip, alright? Betty is also from Rublus. So she can come too. Spencer and I will be there of course." said Donal and they hurried to Professor Loryet's class.

"Good Afternoon everyone. Here is a demonstration of what you are going to learn." Professor Loryet flung the gates wide open and stared at them. He made queer hand movements and kept on glaring at the gates as if releasing some energy out of them. And indeed he was releasing energy from it. The door started vibrating shrilly and then closed all by itself without the slightest of physical touch.

“Seeing the demonstration now, I want to ask you a question.” said he, his eyes shining with vitality. “What in your opinion is power?” he asked, his eyes scanning the class as if piercing everyone’s body.

The class sat completely silent, pondering over the question.

“Can anyone dare to try? Believe me, usually I don’t use Wellizen on children.” he said with a merry guise.

“Yes Miss Betty Hig seems to dare. Come on, Miss, give it a try.” He said once again staring at Betty.

Can he improvise who is afraid and who is not? Can he improvise who has come up with some sort of an answer but doesn’t dare to speak? Walter wondered. He certainly seemed to do so.

Betty got up and said, “Sir, I think power is something that changes the state of rest or state of motion of a body.”

“I appreciate your try, Miss Betty. I really do so but still I think that you are confused between force and power. The thing that you defined just now is called force. I give the class one more chance. Anyone else? Come on people!” he said scanning the class once more. In Professor Loryet’s class, one felt a great transparency as if everything that one is thinking is clearly understood by him.

“I think Master Walter has an answer. Speak up, come on!” said he, now staring at Walter. Really, Walter had finalized an answer but he couldn’t dare to speak up.

“Sir, I think power is something that Morence has given us. I mean something that lies within, something that can never be attained from external sources.” Walter said, earnestly speaking what he felt.

“I must appreciate your precision. Brilliant! Master Walter deserves an applause.” Professor Loryet said. Every one started clapping loudly staring at Walter.

“STOP CLAPPING!” yelled Professor Loryet. Every one stopped clapping abruptly, not understanding Professor’s call. “I mean clap in accordance with Master Walter’s definition. Clap apparently. I mean close your eyes and visualize that you are clapping. Then apparently hear the sound that you are producing apparently and you will produce the sound. Come on, try people. Walter you too, clap for yourself.” He said and looked at everyone. All the students closed their eyes and started imagining. Walter too closed his eyes and imagined himself clapping. He observed that he was extraordinarily good at visualizing this. He could clearly see himself clapping loudly. *CHAT! CHAT! Did he hear the clapping?* Walter pressed trying hard to hear everything. *CHAT! CHAT!* He surely heard it. Now the

class was bursting with a loud applause. *He had done it! They all had done it!* , Walter beamed.

“Brilliant! Brilliant indeed! You all may open your eyes now. Superb! This is the first class in my experience at Plendisecort who did it at the first hit. Didn’t seem so when I scanned you. But this class room has lots of courage. Believe me people; you all have the ability to be masters of Wellizen. Superb!” He said, very excitedly.

“You will soon experience how tired you are. This radiation layer of our skin takes in a lot of energy. So you must eat well and must have a very good stamina. Your fitness classes will start from tomorrow.” He said, smiling.

“Now I would just take a few minutes. I hope you have stamina, youngsters. Alright, I want to explain you how you made the sound that you all made just now. It was no magic. Actually, the radiations that our skin emitted had a particular frequency as well as amplitude. As you all were trying to clap, all radiations of all students was of same frequency as well as amplitude. These radiations struck the ceiling of this room and rebounded and started bouncing here and there. Now in this random movement, the radiations struck each other. As they all were of the same frequency, they coincided with each other to produce a sound. To be precise, they produced a clap. So now you understand. I think that will do for today. Have a good day everyone.” He said and strolled out of the class.

Once again the door opened on its own and closed behind Professor Loryet as soon as he walked out. Professor Loryet was admired by everyone in the class. His strange but active teaching style, his masculine frame, his good nature and moreover his extraordinary Wellizen skills seemed to impress all. Girls chased him, flattering him and talking nonsense to him which he generously refused to talk. On the other hand, boys chose to admire him from a distance.

Walter now felt how tired he really was. Professor was right. Wellizen needed a lot of stamina. Every muscle of his body felt powerless. It was lucky that Wellizen was the last class that they had that day as they all had no stamina left to attend any other class. Slowly they all got back in their tunnels, tiredly, still talking about the Wellizen class. As instructed by Donal, Walter came along with Spencer, Donal and Betty to Rublus leisure room.

After a bit of skiing lessons that Donal gave to Betty, Spencer and Walter, they walked back to the leisure room utterly exhausted.

“Are you sure I should come to Rublus.” Walter said, stopping uncertainly in front of the Burlino tunnel.

“Of course.” Donal said pushing him in Rublus tunnel. It was dusk now and the lights all around the Plendisecort partially enlightened the campus.

Until now, Walter had been with Donal, Spencer and Betty only in class hours and didn’t know them personally. Although all of them seemed nice people, he felt an urge to know them even better.

“Betty would you mind sitting along with us in the leisure room for some time. We all had planned a gossip time.” Donal said, seeing Betty go to the dormitories.

“No. Of course not.” Said she and they all settled on big arm chairs in the corner of the leisure room where many like them were sitting and chatting.

“Skiing was fun, wasn’t it?” said Donal cuddling to find a comfortable posture.

“It was fun for you because you know it well. It was not, for us.” Walter said.

“We should try Stiphel some day.” Spencer said excitedly.

“Stiphel, what?” Walter asked Walter hearing to this word for the first time.

“Don’t tell me you know nothing about Stiphel.” Betty said, appalled.

“I really dunno.” Walter said earnestly.

“I would say you are the first kid I have ever met who does not know about Stiphel. Stiphel is a sport in which there is a big ring and players push it to make it spin. The player on the opposite side tries to keep up the pace with the rotating ring. The players get a bat in their hand which is used to hit the ball which emerges from the centre of the ring. There is nothing but heath all around the ring and the person who falls earlier, loses. The ball is used to hit the player opposite to you and to make him lose balance.” Donal explained, fatigued.

“Oh! I understand.” Walter said though he only partly understood Donal’s description. He observed that the rest of his friends were chuckling at his unknowingness. He felt rage but controlled it somehow. *Their gossip wasn’t going the right way, not right at all*, Walter thought.

“Just to change the topic, what does your father do, Spencer?” Betty asked.

“He is a Ruell Vem engineer. What about you?” Spencer asked Donal.

“Professor at Plendisecort. The same one who taught us cultural studies.” Donal said.

“He was your father! Then why don’t you live with him in his quarters near by?” Spencer asked, shocked.

“I don’t like it. I like hostel life. What does your father do, Betty?” Donal said.

“He is a government official. Finance minister, to be precise. What about you?” asked Betty to Walter when her eye fell finally on him. For the second

time Walter wondered about this question. First was when Professor Birklee had taught him the word Father. *The person to whom your mother must be married*, he had said. It was then that Walter had wondered for the first time where his father was. He had planned that he would ask Seph Smit whenever he would meet her but had forgotten to do so owing to the events which took place so quickly.

Seeing that Walter was lost in his thoughts on asking this question, Donal said, "Don't tell me you don't know what your father does and where he is."

The rest of them burst into laughter.

"I really don't know." Walter said earnestly.

His friends started laughing even harder than before. Walter kept quite for some time looking at their faces but then he just couldn't resist his anger, "Laugh, ruffians!" he yelled, and "You don't know what friends are. Keep laughing! I am no more your friend!" he yelled indignantly and stormed out of the Rublus leisure room. Tears ran down from his face, heavy and fierce and he remembered the definition of a friend that Birklee had told him.

A friend is someone who always stands beside you when you need him and never hurts you, never makes fun of you and accepts you the way you are, he had said. All the time they had just targeted him. Even Betty, he surely didn't expect something like that from Betty. He stormed from the tunnel to the Burlino dormitories and buried his face under his cushion in his chamber, wailing fiercely.

VII

The next day, they had Frozain, physics, Wellizen and cultural studies classes. Physics class was more like a fun class as their teacher Professor Wells concentrated on rearranging their seating arrangements and had mingled them thoroughly to remove the clear distinction between boys and girls clearly seen, otherwise. Even after that Walter had maintained the maximum distance as he possibly could without getting his seat out of the class, from Donal and party. He sat beside a very fat girl sitting in the extreme right of the class, exactly opposite to Donal and party and still he had the faint feeling that Donal and party were chuckling at him.

Frozain, taken by Professor McDonald, the junior Frozain teacher, was not as bad as they had thought. He concentrated on giving them current information and events. That was why his subject was called Frozain- the study of the present. He told them how war clouds are again being created by Nesphereo as they are getting stronger and stronger day by day. They had created something called bombs that could destroy millions within seconds. But the way he spoke was really very drowsy as he stopped for at least two minutes before speaking the next word of a sentence that he wanted to speak. He could tell only this much and the period was over. Now the second most interesting class had come- cultural studies.

“Do you remember when Nesphereo’s troops stormed into Galnovio?” he asked. Everyone answered in monotony, “32nd of Megreb.”

“Good. You all know that Plendisecort reopens for a new session on 32nd of Megreb. So now you understand the historical significance of 32nd of Megreb. The question may come. So, don’t forget. Now, I would continue. I told you about the documents that were excavated from wagaras serat. Now among these documents was a map which gave one the exact location of Dulen. To maintain its importance and security, this map was made a government property and was placed in wagaras museum in the main town. You all must have seen it. Now, you must remember that I am talking of the time after the treaty preventing any one from entering the Dulen was signed between Nesphereo and Galnovio. Two years after this treaty, there was a terrible theft in the wagaras museum and nothing was stolen except the map. I want to tell you something about the wagaras museum. This place is named after the wagaras serat and it surely means that it is a historical place. To tell

you a fact, this was the place where the wise people who made the Dulen resided. They changed this place into a museum and kept the deities, idols and paintings that they had made just to make the entry in the Dulen easy for the Galnovians and tough for foes. The most taking part of the affair is that these deities, idols and paintings could never be decoded. One could never understand what message these things carried. They are still there, just as meaningless for us as they always were. But you must also know that these places are the most well protected places found in Galnovio. The scientists have developed many things to protect this place. But even after this security the map was stolen. The quest is on, even now, without any results though. Just to tell you what we are going to study tomorrow, I want to tell you that Galnovio and Nesphereo are foes now and any person who migrates from Galnovio to Nesphereo or vice versa is called dequisiter- literally meaning traitor. The person is socially, financially and even physically boycotted and is generally sent to prison or sometimes is killed by the people itself by stoning or hanging. We would discuss Professor Mortati tomorrow.” He said and strolled out of the classroom. Once again, Professor Mosbee’s class ended with a buzz of stupefaction. Walter got up quite briskly to maintain a distance from Donal and party which he seemed to lose. Wellizen class was nothing less, interesting either.

“Yesterday you produced some sound waves and clapped apparently. I want to tell you that the thing you did yesterday was the easiest of the lot. You are going to move things without ever touching them, today. Any one of you who thinks he can try it, come out. First come, first serve.” He said and looked at the class with his piercing glance.

“Master Ted and Miss Emily seem to dare it. Come out, both of you.” He said, once again improvising who was afraid and who was not without the slightest of delay. A girl with a crooked nose covering almost all of her face came out along with a pale, tall and lean boy wearing glasses.

Professor Loryet put a magnet made glass in front of them and said, “I want both you to move this container from here to the other end of the table. The process remains the same. First of all, observe the object very closely, then close your eyes, imagine that you are moving this glass and you will really be moving the glass.”

Emily and Ted closed at their eyes and started imagining. For a long time nothing happened. Many a times the glass just vibrated shrilly and then again rested on the table. After a few more tries, they both gave away. They were sweating fiercely and every part of their body seemed to give away.

“Just to prevent the rise of any misconception, girls and boys have equally developed radiation layer and the girls can be as strong as or even stronger

than men in Wellizen.” said Professor Loryet putting one glass on every table.

“Choose partners. If you are a boy, then search for a girl and vice versa.” Professor said.

Walter desperately searched for someone who could come along with him. How embarrassing it would be if he would be left alone, he thought. He was looking at the left side when someone came from the right side and stood beside him. Walter felt someone’s presence and looked at his right. It was no one else but Betty Hig. As soon as he saw her, his body burnt with rage. The sights of her laughing mercilessly at him came striking back to his mind. He turned away from her, planning to leave the seat.

“Forgive me. If not Donal and Spencer, at least forgive me. Just after you stormed away, I scolded them for such behavior. They didn’t seem to care, so I am not talking to both of them either.” Betty said, just when Walter was about to leave the seat.

This seemed to soothe Walter. He stared at Betty, her pure and honest eyes took over his anger.

“Donal was not this way. I think Spencer made him like that. I am not talking to them until they apologize to you. Do you forgive me?” she said, her eyes shining with hope. Walter nodded and smiled at Betty who smiled back.

“Ready people? Well let us see who has the real power, as Master Walter defined yesterday.” Professor Loryet said. “START!”

Now that he had made up with at least one person in the school, Walter felt a new energy empowering his soul. He closed his eyes along with Betty and visualized the movement of glass. Nothing happened. They tried even harder. Still nothing happened. Tired and dripping, they opened their eyes despairingly. Everyone else had given up long ago and they found that all the eyes were riveted on them. They looked at Professor Loryet. He was smiling brightly, “Master Walter and Miss Betty seem to win the prize. They tried for the longest period of time and if we study statistically, they did it too. I simply mean that this glass cannot be made to move. It is a magnet made glass and magnet absorbs the radiations released by our body. But a time comes when magnet loses its ability to absorb any more radiations and at that time magnet becomes so loose that it shatters in a touch. Miss Betty and Master Walter, try it.”

Walter and Betty touched the glass but even before their hand could get to hold it the glass, it shattered just like a card palace. They both stared at the pieces of the magnetic glass.

“Everyone else, see if their magnetic glass too shatters to pieces like their glass.” Professor Loryet said but no one else could do what they had done.

“That will do. I must appreciate your stamina, a lot better than what it was yesterday. Good Day people.” He said and left the classroom.

“May I ask you something?” Walter asked Betty, now that their all classes were over.

“Yes, sure.” She replied tenderly.

“And do you promise you won’t laugh at me?”

“I promise I won’t.”

“What is the Global cup?” Walter finally asked the question which was gnawing him from quite a few days.

“Well, it is the yearly cup held at Plendisecort which includes Stiphel, Wellizen and Skiing. First of all, the three houses of the first year compete. The house which wins, competes with the winning second year house.” She explained.

“Then the second years must be winning at all times.”

“No. Not every time. Only last year, the first years defeated the second years.” Betty said.

“I want to defeat Rublus in everything because. I don’t care if we lose to Gursled. But we will not lose to Rublus.” Walter said energetically. “Betty can we go over to Stiphel fields and practice? I want to learn the sport.”

“Sure.” Betty replied listening to Rublus’s loss declaration even when she was in Rublus.

Crossing the buildings and the big ridge that separated the academic block from the administrative block, they reached a big field that stretched to everywhere one could possibly see. There were many big rings with a centre hollow and all around the ring there was heath. Deep, very deep heath. Walter walked over to the nearest ring he could see. But the ring and the ground was separated by an area surely not less enough to jump.

“Use your magnet. The centre of the ring is magnetic. I will just get the bats.” Betty said and ran away to get the bats.

Walter put his magnet in front of his face. Once again, he felt a terrible force pulling him towards the centre. He moved the magnet in opposite direction to prevent a crash and safely landed on the ring. When he landed on the ring he came to know how very slippery it was. It was very difficult to walk and with the feeling that one is surrounded by deep heath from all sides, the walk became even slower. Betty jumped on the ring with her magnet and threw a bat at Walter. The bat was flat from both sides and its hitting surface was narrow from the top and broad from the lower side.

“Now see I will rotate the ring with my feet. You will have to try to keep up with my pace without coming on my side of the ring. Can you see, that one is your part and this one is mine.” She said, pointing at right half of the ring as Walter’s part and the left one as her’s.

“HERE WE GO!!” she shouted and gave the ring a push with her legs. The ring started rotating. Walter too had to jog in the opposite direction to prevent him from going over to her side. The ring’s slippery nature made it even more difficult to keep up with. Moreover, it seemed to be built of something like ice and Walter was really struggling to keep up. Walter had to do something. Perhaps he should push the ring even harder to make her lose the pace. Yes he should do that, he thought. While passing through his legs, Walter gave the ring a greater push and the ring started rotating faster. Now, it clearly seemed that Betty was having a tough time in keeping up. The control of the ring had passed from Betty to Walter. Walter knew that if he would suddenly stop the ring, Betty would go straight down in the heath.

“What is down there in the heath?” Walter asked.

“Oh! Nothing serious. There is a net deep down there which rebounds the person who falls on it to put him back on the ground beside the ring.” said Betty, struggling and not understanding Walter’s real intention in asking that question.

Walter thought that if it was nothing serious then he must stop the ring. He slipped to the very edge of the ring and there he put his leg on the corner of the ring which made the ring stop suddenly. Betty certainly didn’t expect this from Walter and she lost her control, screeched and fell in the heath. Her screech echoed around the heath. Walter peered down to see if anything was wrong but the very next moment she came bouncing up and landed on the ground beside the ring.

“You scared me to death.” she said, really looking bedraggled and woebegone.

“I am sorry. You said it was nothing dangerous so I played my tricks.” Walter said guiltily.

“I must tell my house mates that a superb player is playing Stiphel for Burlino this time and they must prepare very hard.” Betty said, smiling. Walter grinned back.

“What is the use of this bat? I didn’t use this at all.” Walter asked.

“We just concentrated on getting comfortable on the ring. The bat is used for hitting your opponent when he is losing his balance.” Betty replied.

“Doesn’t the ball hurt?” Walter asked as the thought struck him.

“No, it doesn’t. It’s quite light, you see. But they are good enough to get you off that slippery ring. Think about the other two things that are included in

Global cup. We have good Stiphel and Skiing players but I don't know about Wellizen. Perhaps, I will prove to be success at Wellizen." Betty said, grinning.

Walter believed that he was good at Wellizen but didn't know what they would have to do. Would they have a one to one Wellizen duel? If yes then he will kill that Donal and his stupid friend Spencer, Walter thought.

Betty and Walter strolled away, bidding goodbye to each other as they entered their tunnels.

Walter ran to his leisure room to see if some one was around. He saw a boy playing with paint, pouring it all over his uniform. Walter walked over to him and asked, courteously "What do you think you are doing?"

"I am trying to make a masterpiece." The boy said calmly. "You know The Simpson. Just like him. With lots of secrets hidden in its surfaces."

"Who was the Simpson?"

"Simpson was one of the creator of the map of Dulen. One of his deities was decoded just a few days back. By mistake, that deity fell down and shattered. When people picked up the pieces, they found a note in it." the boy replied.

"What was written in it?" Walter asked, feeling interest in the boy.

"They kept it secret. What do you think about Professor Mosbee?" asked the boy.

"I think he is a great teacher. The way he explains things is quite superb. What about you?"

"Of course he is a good teacher. But there is something creepy about him that I heard just a day back from someone."

"What?"

"That he has fought with all Professors at Plendisecort because of his know-it-all nature and is now-a-days left lonely." explained the boy.

"Just like his son." Walter said clenching his fists.

"You know his son?"

"I *knew* his son. Now I don't. I would suggest you to stay away from him." Walter said remembering the incident again. "Well whatever, do you know anything about our house's skiing player?"

"Yes I do. I am the skiing player for Burlino. I don't know about the other two. We are supposed to choose two players for Stiphel this time. This time its only doubles, no singles. Wellizen duel is very lethal. I don't think too many from our house would dare it." The boy said.

"I would. Are you very good at Skiing; because I think our opponents are quite good and we have to win at all costs." Walter said.

"I don't think you know the fact." The boy said.

“Which fact?” Walter said, tired of this unknowingness. The boy carefully looked around the room. There were many like them playing here and there. Seeing this, the boy held Walter’s hand and ran into the tunnel. He stopped in the midst of the tunnel, pushed Walter in a corner and said, “I think you don’t know that Rublus and Gursled are the top houses. They always defeat Burlino and one of them enters the Global cup. Burlino competed in the Global Cup when my father was at our age. Things have changed now. This chit system that Plendisecort started using gave fair results and this was not liked by children who had to go to Burlino. Burlino is defamed just because of its constant loss to other teams. And this time too, parents of the students who got into Burlino sent a letter to Plendisecort asking the school to change the house of their children. It’s all a game of money. They sent the school authorities one thousand felas and the job is done. Now, Burlino is full of duffers who have come from various good houses in place of the good ones who have left Burlino. You understand? There is no chance that Burlino can win the cup.”

Walter heard all this and darkness fell in front of his eyes. *I am in a house of duffers*, he thought.

“Imagine, I have talked to you so much and I still don’t know what your name is?” the boy said, smiling.

“Walter.” Walter said, lost in what the boy had just said.

“My name is Louis Tipton.” the boy said.

“Can a single man play Wellizen as well as Stiphel?” Walter asked, his eyes seeing something far away.

“I think so. There is no law prohibiting him to.” Louis said.

“Then I am doing it.” Walter said and rushed away to get his name registered to the warden.

Professor Loryet stood in his room, facing the window, looking at the playing children outside his office. His office was nothing less than a collection store. One could see millions of awards and certificates arranged very neatly on the desks. He had carved a very beautiful statue of his father which stood at the extreme corner of his office shining brightly under the effect of the setting Lom. His eyes fell on the statue and once again the painful memories came striking back to his mind. Wellizen skills had made him powerful but still he could not kill his father’s murderer even when he knew who he was. His heart, once again, burned with rage and fury.

“May I come in Sir?” came a voice from the door. Professor Loryet turned away from the window and said, “Come in.”

For some time the figure struggled with the gate but then it emerged clearly. It was no one else but Professor Hanison.

“You sent for me Sir?”

“Yes I did, Professor Hanison. I think its time for you to unveil your second post that is given to you. I mean the post of Troops Administrator. I think the circumstances are changing now. I get a letter everyday from Nesphereo asking for Walter Martin. I have told them over a hundred times that there is no one called that but they don’t think I am speaking the truth. As a consequence of this, I think they may attack any day. We must at least be ready for an attack. I want you to get some troops in the eastern front as well as northern front. Those two areas expect an attack. And yes, I want you to inform the first years that they will be having a double Wellizen class from tomorrow. They must at least know self defense.”

“Yes sir.” Professor Hanison said and rushed out of the room.

As all the three houses got their breakfast, lunch as well as dinner in their house dining room itself, Walter didn’t get to see Donal and Spencer too much which he gratefully acknowledged. They had to go to the main hall just for some special occasion which seldom came. The thing that surprised Walter the most was that he hadn’t seen the second years and the higher years at all after the opening day. Perhaps they had their dormitories far away from the first years to prevent them from abusing or ragging the first years. Their festival, Pojen (Birthday of Morence) was approaching (3rd of Ryjat) and the festive atmosphere could be experienced in the school campus. Teachers too, had loosened the mane and taught less and that too humorously. Everyone seemed to be in a festive mood except Professor Loryet who seemed even more serious than before and taught even more than before. Every time he seemed worried and seldom his lips lengthened to give a smile. Until the end of the month of the month Megreb, every one seemed relaxed and pleasure bent but one day Professor Loryet took a teachers meeting and after that things became from good to bad waiting to be worse. Once again Professor Mosbee took their class after three days of skipping because of something he called work but actually was decoration of the hall for Pojen. Cultural studies, once more took everyone stupefied by the tale that Professor Mosbee told them.

“Professor Mortati,” Professor Mosbee said darkly, “was the most hated person who ever lived in Galnovio. I will be clear now. Actually, Mortati was a Nespherean. He was a royal guard there but with high aspirations. He kept on ascending in position and within a year became the supreme commander of Nesphereo. I tell you, he was a great man. He would make

you say whatever he wants you to say. He would know whatever you ask him. Went down to the bad side, though. When all these deities, idols and paintings were excavated from wagaras museum, he came to know all this. He wanted Nesphereo to get something too. He could do nothing directly as Wellizen was more powerful than his guns and everything. He had to learn Wellizen somehow. So he, along with his mates made a conspiracy against Galnovio. For over three years he and his mates worked on a tunnel which connected Galnovio to Nesphereo, all underground. The tunnel extended to a length of fifteen kilometers and was called the demons tunnel later on. He entered Galnovio like a monk and actually as a spy and lived in slum for a few years to learn Sistros. When he could speak Sistros fluently, he came over to Plendisecort for employment. Owing to his wittiness and sharpness, the then principal of the school Professor Harles's father, appointed him as a Sistros teacher. He and Professor Loryet became great friends and here he requested Professor Loryet to teach him Wellizen which was his sole purpose in entering Galnovio. Professor Loryet couldn't even imagine that he could be a spy and taught him Wellizen as good as he knew it. One fine day, Professor Mortati disappeared stealing a few paintings and idols on which he could lay his hands. On searching his house the police found the tunnel which now was blocked by some thing very strong. He took much information out of Galnovio and the most important was, of course, the art of Wellizen. Professor Loryet was so shocked by this event that he died of a heart stroke and his son Professor Harles took over as the principal. I tell you, he is still the most wanted in Galnovio and still the police can not arrest him even when they know he is Nesphereo. Morence knows what he did with the idols that he stole and what he did with the art of Wellizen that was taught to him. There are some rumors circling around that he has opened a school to teach Wellizen but there is no proof of that. Now in Plendisecort there is no principal. The principal system has been abolished but still Professor Loryet handles all the affairs of Plendisecort. The house that Professor Mortati used in Galnovio now belongs to Professor Loric Hanison who is a professor at Plendisecort. He has taken up the house for research and detection. I think that will do for the day. I want you all to write a short note on Professor Mortati in your own words. Degred Naid."

After having lunch in their dormitories thinking about the evil Mortati, the first years moved listlessly towards the green fields where they were supposed to have their Wellizen class. The reason for such change of location for the class was unknown.

Carving their way through a footpath which was the only way to reach the lawns from the academic buildings, they entered a narrow alley which was

made through tall mountains and peaks which stood on either side of the alley, looking down upon the tiny first years. After passing through a check post where their magnetic identity cards were recognized, they entered the lawns where the grasses stretched infinitely to an unaccountable expanse, all the time with the same height. The lawn was bordered by many herbs with large and beautiful flowers which were in the midst of their noon day dreams. Although it was midday, Lom wasn't very bright owing to the clouds which came drifting over it, covering it and reducing its brightness, the phenomenon being very common in Galnovio.

Walter and Louis came very slowly, at the very end of the first years' procession, talking deeply about the Global Cup.

Professor Harles stood in the centre of the lawn admiring the moods of the nature but with a frown.

"Degred Ubina." Said Professor Loryet as the first years approached him. "Good Afternoon."

He beckoned everyone to sit on the lawns.

"You all must be wondering why I called you here when we have our classrooms." He stopped, scanning the class. "You would know. Until now, there have been two conditions under which you have been practicing Wellizen. Can you name them?"

"Miss Craig seems to know one of them." He said himself. This skill of Professor Loryet of improvising and understanding everything by just looking in the eyes had become a menacing mystery for all first years and they had supposed that Professor Harles was gifted with some special powers.

A blonde stood up. She had a strange smile in which her teeth occupied most of her face and her eyes were green. She wore the same blue uniform with the cloak.

"We need to close our eyes sir." The girl said in a queer voice which made many chuckle.

"You are right at that and as I know that you or anyone else in the class cannot recall the second condition, I will enlighten you. The second condition is that you need a reflecting surface overhead to reflect the radiations that you emit. Right?" Professor Loryet said. The class spoke in singsong monotony "Yes sir."

"Now I want to expel these two conditions. I want you to practice Wellizen in the absence of a reflecting surface and without closing your eyes." He waited to see what impression had it made on his class and then he continued. "The procedure now is a bit intricate but very much possible. With your eyes open you have to visualize yourself doing the thing which

you want to do. Then use the sky as a reflecting surface. You will have to emit stronger radiations as the major part of your radiations will be absorbed by the various gaseous layers of the atmosphere. We would have practiced this but we seem to be in a lack of time. I want you all to try this in your Pojen holidays. We would see if anyone of us succeeds. Degred Naid.” Professor Loryet said and vanished out of sight. Louis, who till now had been sitting beside Walter, chased Professor Loryet as he wanted to ask him what they were supposed to do in Global Cup Wellizen.

As it was the last class that they had for the day and the next day was Pojen, all the students dispersed to pack their luggage for going to their homes after the Pojen program that the school held on that day.

Walter didn’t go to the Burlino tunnel and wandered around the lawn. He climbed the near by plateau which was used for magnetic flying lessons and sat there with a thud. He took out a letter that he carried in his pocket that his mother had written him and though he had read it for over a hundred times, started reading again.

Dear Walter,

A very merry Pojen in advance! I knew you would forget writing to me so I am writing to you and in future I want you to write to me too. I sincerely hope that you are prospering and are absolutely top hole. It’s been seven days since you left for Plendisecort and I hope that you made a lot of friends there and are enjoying your school life to its fullest.

Walter, I know that you will be getting a nine day holiday for Pojen and you are allowed to come home, I am very much afraid that I will not be around on Pojen. I have got some business Walter for which I have to go out. I hope you don’t mind staying at Plendisecort for these nine days.

I know you have your Global Cup and you are representing your house for Wellizen as well as Stiphel. I am very glad that you are an active participant in the school affairs. Work hard at studies too and become the Nelsauf (Something like a head boy and the leader of the school) I am proud of you.

*Your Mother,
Seph Smit.*

Once again hopelessness seized him as he thought that he is not going to see his mother in the near future. In the beginning he had thought that Professor Birklee and his wife will see him regularly and will take care of him but this hope of his had crashed into ruins. During the interview, Birklee had

completely ignored him and even in the class that they had had with him, he had chosen to ignore Walter. He buried his head in his hands and started sobbing quietly.

“Walter, guess what one has to do in Global Cup Wellizen?” Louis said sprinting towards Walter.

“What?” Walter said, getting up and dabbing his eyes.

“Walter, it is a one on one duel. The person, who falls down on the ground with both of his arms rested on the ground, loses. Moreover, the duel will be in the open. We are ought to work hard, Walter, if we really want to win. Oh damn! Now you must be going home for these holidays. We could have-”

“No, I am not going home. Why? Aren’t you going?” Walter asked excitedly.

“Of course not. My parents are researchers and they live deep in forests in a small hut. They don’t even remember to have their meals. How will they remember to pick me up from here? But why aren’t you going?”

Walter’s spirits rose as high as they had fallen. He handed over his mother’s letter to Louis and quickly descended the plateau. Louis read the letter for some time and then yelled, “Whoa! So you are not going either. We can start our practices right away then. I am Burlino’s skiing player as well as I am your partner at Stiphel and Wellizen. Gosh! I have got so much work.” He chased Walter who had already targeted the fields to train Louis at Stiphel.

Some meters away, Loric Hanison stood in the staff room waiting for Professor Harles to arrive. For the first time in his teaching career he felt shy and hesitant. He had just seen Walter and Louis running to the fields and every promise that he had made to Seph Smit came flooding back to his mind. But here he was waiting for Professor Loryet for something far more important. He planned that he would delay the truth for some days until all these war clouds go away. The door swung open and Professor Loryet entered the staff room. The room was empty except these two.

“Professor I have employed troops according to your directions.” Loric Hanison said. Professor Loryet gathered all his papers that lay scattered in a corner and then just nodded. He was about to go out of the room when Loric Hanison said, “Professor, can I say something?” Professor Harles nodded again.

“Sir, don’t you think that we are burdening our first years? Last year, studies didn’t even start before Pojen and this time we are teaching them Wellizen

in the open which is in the syllabus for the second years. No wonder they are looking timid.” He said slowly.

“I get your point Professor. But the conditions this year are different from the last year. We didn’t have the danger of being destroyed entirely last year. We didn’t have the danger of losing our heritage forever last year. They will have to work hard and as a matter of fact they are doing quite well. You don’t need to worry.” Professor Harles said and stormed out of the room before Loric Hanison could even speak a word more.

“It wasn’t very bad, eh? I fell forty eight times and you fell forty seven times. I am feeling dizzy because of that repeated fall.” Louis said as they entered their house tunnel after four hours of hard work.

Walter didn’t seem to be in a good mood. His face was darkened by some thought and his eyes looked at something far. He was feeling worried about their poor performance. Stiphel wasn’t easy as he had thought it was. He had not talked to Betty from two days as they had decided that they won’t talk until the Global Cup was over. Betty had wished him luck for his practices even when she was Rublus- the most hated house for Walter. But the luck was proving to be insufficient. The slippery ring swung horribly with utmost ferocity and threw them in heath very often. It was just like a bull that refused to station anyone at its back and threw the daring person off its back. The game became even more difficult when one had to coordinate with the partner and regulate the speed according to him. The coaches often came to see their game and severely criticized them for the slow ring movement even when they themselves thought that the ring was moving the fastest. Even after their complete effort the ring could rotate just like the wheel of a bullock cart and often reduced to zero. When Louis and Walter came on the same side of the ring to play against the two coaches who after tremendous pressure had agreed to teach *them*, the ring rotated horribly fast by the quick foot movement of those two people and after clinging on to the ring by holding it’s edge for some seconds, Walter and Louis both fell on the ground, thrown just like throwing a thing after rotating it for some time and then flying in the tangent direction.

“Don’t you think we were awful?” Walter asked.

“Of course I know that we were awful, Walter but you have to be first of all awful to become awesome, you understand. If we work hard, we can improve and we will improve. Believe me.” Louis said patting him on his shoulder. The room was full of many folks sitting here and there, some in

groups and some alone. Walter had talked to every folk to see if Louis was really right and if all of them were duffers and good for nothing. Louis had been right. There was not a single fellow who could even dare to stand on the Stiphel ring. One was Garol Bikovsky, the big boy. He was a master of lies and running out false rumors. He liked to show off his power but was nothing but a pawn when someone came face to face in front of him. The other was Nory Solido, the geek. He always was lost in his own world and seldom got time to look up from his work which someone said was a collection of odd diagrams and statistical histograms. Another was Edward Setotly, the jester. He didn't miss even a single opportunity of making fun of someone and sometimes even laughed at his own big nose. Most of his jokes were nonsense but still most of the time he was surrounded by a crowd of people which he gratefully enjoyed. Girls like Lily Stanel too are worth mentioning. This girl, according to Walter was the biggest fool he had ever met.

"What is your hobby?" Walter had asked her.

"Meditation." She said.

"Medi what?"

"The spiritual and the only way to attain freedom from the cycle of birth and rebirth is called meditation." The girl said. "Morence, Morence, Morence....."

She closed her eyes and kept muttering this. Walter slipped out of her eyesight laughing at the outlandish girl. Another girl that seemed equally foolish was Georgina Kijuyet. She was the most non athletic girl he had ever met. Her favorite pastime was to sit and her only hobby was also to sit. Even the slightest of displacement seemed difficult to her and she liked to remain at inertia. Walter had terribly failed in getting any athlete in his house and when he went to Edward Setotly to ask him if he could play Stiphel, he said, "I cannot play Stiphel but I can throw you in a death knell." The band of his eulogists burst into laughter and Walter slipped out of their group in utmost hopelessness. He was now sure that in his house only he and Louis Tipton could do something.

VIII

Sitting in the Nespherean administrative head office in the Nespherean Main Chancellor Street, Professor Mortati sighed. He stretched back in his seat after a tiresome work session. His office was a collection of priceless masterpieces, excavated from the Xenol, the main museum of Nesphereo. According to him, his office was the safest place that ever existed and he never trusted his assistants and colleagues for his priceless collection. Very near to his office, just behind his high security vaults for securing documents, was his own personal prison. Here, he held the most serious, notorious and important criminals, captive. Although, the prison had fifty individual cells, the prison never had more than two or three prisoners as it was said that no one returned alive after serving in Professor Mortati's personal prisons. The inmates were very often starved to death or were beaten mercilessly by Professor Mortati himself whenever he was frustrated. The inmates were used as testing dummies and were often used for scientific tests on humans which the scientists themselves proclaimed to be lethal. One could only get out of the prison in one form- corpse.

The administrative building of Nesphereo was a forty five storied building and was one of the most beautiful places to look at, but only from a distance. The building carried the offices of the governmental officials, the band of murderers who met once every day to decide the policy and programming of the government. Nespherean administrative head office was a unique showcase of unique and baffling security in which a member was first of all supposed to enter his identity code, then put his finger on the sensors where his fingerprints will be examined and then the tattoo engraved on his neck which would be different for every member would be examined. The member then passes through a zero gravity security check passage where every part of his body is checked. To carry a pin too was not allowed and if anything was found in the member's pocket, the siren will immediately be broken which would mean high alert and offender would be transferred to Professor Mortati's personal prisons for check. Mortati had now made a law according to which even if a member falls in the trap by keeping anything in his pockets even by mistake, he would be kept in the prison for a year during which a new member will be elected in place of the imprisoned one. Such

merciless and harsh laws controlled Nesphereo which made it strong, no doubt but on the whole, uninhabitable.

Professor Mortati got up from his chair for a walk. It was his routine to walk in his room which stretched to a floor, all for him. Even his bed room was in the building and he wondered how many years had passed without him seeing anything outside this building. He remained in the building but controlled whole of the Nesphereo with astonishing power. He was the absolute commander of Nesphereo and could rule just by plain orders and decrees. Once again he remembered what Nesphereo had done for him. He would have been dead by now if Nesphereo hadn't saved him. Once again responsibility and gratitude towards his mother land saved him for going out of his building. The whole incident of his motherland's nobility and Galnovio's meanness came flooding back to his mind.

He had been a Galnovian citizen, the son of a farmer who lived in the outskirts of the Galnovio. His name was William Folisa, a keen athlete. He used to play in his nearby fields with his friends, very near to Galnovio-Nesphereo border. One day when he saw that no one was around, he felt an urge to cross the Galnovian border and see the area beyond it. It was just a short wall, nothing for an athlete like him. Eight years old he had been at that time. He jumped across the wall and went forth. He found many charming places and he sat there and enjoyed in the area beyond his borders. When the evening fell, he decided to go back. Just when he was jumping back to Galnovio, his friends who were playing near by saw him. Their faces went pale with horror and before he could invite them to join him in his next visit to Nesphereo, they all disappeared and told whole of the village that he had crossed the Galnovian border. Within half an hour he was bound with strong ropes against a tree. The local head of the village called a meeting then and there and gave the sentence of stoning till death to him. Everyone gathered around the tree and threw stones at him ruthlessly. In the faint light of twilight through striking stones, he could see even his father and mother throwing stones at him. His skin was smeared all over with blood and every inch of his body was peeled off by repeated shots. At midnight, according to custom everyone stopped stoning and left him on his own bleeding body. It was decided that if he doesn't die by the morning, he would be hanged. The strong ropes still held him tightly and his skin was removed by the strong hold of the ropes. There was no use of shouting. He had no energy to yell. A sudden painful sluggishness fell upon him and he felt as if he was dying. Darkness fell upon him and when he awoke the next morning, he was not bound as he thought he would be. He was alive and was in a small hut, where and how, he didn't know. A shadow came over him and whispered

something to him in an unknown language. He felt for his wounds. They were still painful but were dressed very neatly. After convalescing for a few days, he felt stronger. The man couldn't be seen during the day. He only came in the evenings and departed early in the mornings. The man taught him a language called English and told him that he had witnessed the scene of his stoning as he was a guard on the Nespherean border and could see everything on the Galnovian side by peering over the wall. He had saved William only because he thought that he was strong and believed that he will make a good soldier for Nesphereo. He told that he had taken higher authority's permission before saving him. When he asked the guard where he was when he had entered the Nespherean area, the guard replied, "Boy, you were lucky that day. It was the Holy Day of the Nesphereans. The only day on which all work stops, hatred ceases and peace extends. I was in my hut that day."

He had been saved by Nesphereo. Once again rage against Galnovio empowered his fists and he punched a nearby window which shattered at a blow. He had taken the revenge only partially and again Galnovio had played games against him. They had taken the wrong advantage of his mercy. He now remembered his biggest mission that he had succeeded on- the mission of breaking into Galnovio. A final move was required. A final move which would destroy Galnovio entirely and the key to Dulen will be Nesphereo's.

Thirteen floors below in the same building, scientists were working to make the bomb- the bomb which would be the final move against Galnovio. Poor Galnovian creatures don't even know how to spell bomb, the scientists thought as their bomb developed to the ultimate weapon for destruction as ordered by Professor Mortati.

Galnovio- the valley of religion, of purity and of ecstasy was present in a low lying area surrounded by high, snow capped mountains. Snow perpetually covered the Galnovian surface and excessive cold had become a habit for them. The Galnovians seldom dared to get out of their houses after ten o' clock when sixteen o' clock was the midnight. The main occupation was agriculture and trees were the main wealth for Galnovians. The two minerals which were found in Galnovio were used to its fullest by Galnovian scientists' discoveries. The people believed in odd superstitions (which, of course was truth for them) and lived in harmony with nature. The superstitions like one must get out of the house only when the permission of all the members of the house has been taken, including infants and that one

must not purchase anything new in the month of Ryjat because according to them, Ryjat was the month when Morence had died, controlled Galnovians and yet Galnovians were sensible, plateful and kind people. There was nothing called robbery in Galnovio and no one ever dared to do anything by which Morence could be indignant, according to them. Galnovians had a short life of about forty years and ten years of age was said to be big enough an age. When someone said that one is old, one meant that one is over twenty years of age. Professor Harles was sixteen years old and Professor Loric Hanison was thirty four year old, old enough an age. Galnovio, as a place was very well maintained and silent. The Galnovio wagarasca lied in the center of Galnovio from which emerged many roads reaching to every corner of Galnovio. Very near to the wagarasca, was the Wagaras serat and museum. The Galnovian government head office was a small building compared to the large Plendisecort. This building was the one from which all the administration was carried out. The Galnovian police was responsible for maintaining law and order even though Galnovians were extraordinarily civilized and obedient people.

Plendisecort- the school made by the Halvins, the guardians of the Dulen and Galnovio, had initially been only a small mansion in the east of Galnovio but now Plendisecort credited for a major part of Galnovio. Its structure became even more mind numbing when someone heard that it had been made by the hollowing of mountains. The Halvins- the supreme masters of Wellizen had used their skills to do a task which posed impossible even for modern machines. The mountain range of Plendisecort was often called the gift of Morence as it was the biggest source of partner magnets which were of supreme use in Galnovio. The Halvins had great architectural sense which could clearly be seen when one saw that the central and the highest mountain peak in the range was chosen as main administrative office of the school. The architecture became even more accurate and understandable when someone saw the Galnovian Government head office stood exactly opposite to the school administrative office some kilometers away. A narrow pass arose from the foot of the Plendisecort administrative office which led one to every place one could go to. To the right of this building was the staff room, a royal and triple storied hollowed mountain, for which the word 'room' was surely an underestimate. It carried everything, from bedrooms for important teachers to individual study room for every professor, from leisure parks to large Elysian lawns and so on. On the third story was Professor Harles' residence, nothing less than a palace. On the left were the first years' academic buildings and just behind it, the first years' dormitories. This prevented the first years from lurking around

too much and also prevented them from being ragged. The first years and the other students were separated by a strong high wall which had a miniature entrance exclusively open for the second years' magnetic identity cards. Many similar walls separated the students of different years, the highest being the fifth years. For students of the different classes, different playing fields were made to prevent the rise of any friction. It was said that ones a person passes successfully out of Plendisecort, his future was surely going to be bright. But the fifth year was toughest and it took students three to four years to pass the fifth year. If a student passed the fifth year without repeating it, he was said to be a genius. The students who passed of the school often became government servants as master grade of Wellizen was necessary qualification for becoming a governmental official or became independent scientists or professors at Plendisecort itself. Carrier of engineers or researchers required no compulsory Plendisecort education and a mediocre often thanked it for he comfortably could do something. The jury of the Plendisecort entrance interview was notorious among the rustics for harassing, abusing and compressing the candidate and most of the people avoided Plendisecort because of its high fees and tough interviews.

Once in Plendisecort, things became enjoyable. Although this year Professor Harles had avoided festivals and extra curricular activities, he could not avoid the Global Cup which he reluctantly approved to hold after tremendous pressure was put on him by the staff and the senior students. Until last year, Wellizen was not a part of Global Cup but this was the condition that Professor Harles had put if the Cup was to be held. His intention for putting this condition was that he wanted the first years to know how to defend themselves in the open. All the other staff thought that Professor Harles was overestimating Nesphereo's power and severely criticized him for the move as they thought that there was a danger to the life of the children who would compete in the Wellizen duel which was proved to be lethal many a times.

Every student of Plendisecort was given a magnetic identity card which was recognized before the beginning of every class by a small machine which contained the magnet types of every student of the school. If the card attracted the machine, the door was let open. As the magnets in Galnovio were only found in pairs and the attractive property existed only between this pair of magnets, nobody could enter the gate until he had the legal card. This same card was used to send and receive messages. Every citizen of Galnovio was given a card often called the master card which was used to give votes during elections and also was the receiving card. If a student of Plendisecort wanted to send a letter to someone outside, he just needed the

magnet dust as the post stamp. Now the receiver went to the post office randomly to check for the post. The post office was nothing but a deep ditch in which all the transported letters of the area were thrown. As soon as the receiver stretched his master card towards the ditch, the pairing magnets attracted each other and the letter flew to the receiver. The government kept one of the pair of the magnet rust and supplied it to sender through names. The letters were transported by ARVs. The same process took place vice versa when someone on the outside had to send a post to a student of Plendisecort.

In the dormitories, every student of Plendisecort was given a chamber which consisted of a bed, a study table, an almirah and a study lamp. Every chamber was surrounded by four wooden walls on which most of the students had got posters. Walter had pasted a portrait that he himself had made of his mother which resembled more like a bull's face with a make up owing to the big nose, circular eyes and red lips which was a novelty of every painting that Walter made.

Sitting in his chamber of the first years' dormitory, Walter got up and paced up and down his chamber. His almirah was neatly closed and a beautiful flower vase with fresh flowers was kept on his study table. Although Walter's habits were strange and his manner unique, he had a great care for cleanliness which differentiated him from the rest of his counterparts. The next day was Pojen, the fun day but Walter was bent over something far more important, according to him. He had been working very hard on his Wellizen skills and now that a chapter of Wellizen in the open and without closing eyes was added to his knowledge, he felt uncomfortable at his complete failure to do it. He wanted to practice it. Night had fallen and the leisure room was absolutely quite. He knew he was not allowed to move out of the dormitories after sunset but his desire to learn was far more overpowering. *Should I go out alone?* He wondered. He quickly took the decision and after wearing his cloak and scarf, slipped out of his room. Carving his way through the administrative block, he crossed the pass and entered the lawns where they had had their Wellizen class in the morning. The lawn was cold and ghostly and looked pale under the effect of the near by jiopy lamp. Walter looked in all directions to ensure his isolation and then concentrated on what he was there for. For some time, he kept trying to move the branch of a near by tree but his efforts proved futile. The branch was thick and rigid. Walter tried to do something easier. He visualized that

his shoe laces are being untied but still nothing happened. The laces were as well tied as they always were. Desperate now, Walter tried to move his cloak. He put all his efforts to do it by opening his palms wide open which were said to be the highest radiators.

“Who is it and what are you doing?” suddenly came a voice from behind Walter’s shoulder. The voice was frightened but yet distinct. Walter froze, horrified. Every muscle of his body refused to work. Pushing somehow, he turned back. In the faint light the lamp he could see two silhouettes walking calmly up to him.

“Whoa! It’s our Walter. What’s up, man?”

As they came closer, Walter could see that it was Donal and his mate, Spencer. Their faces carried a wicked smile and most of their foreheads were covered by their scarves. Once again, rage overpowered Walter and his eyebrows clouded to a frown. He ignored the question and headed towards his dormitory.

“We were with Professor Wells for some job of importance but what the hell are you doing here? Trying to get some information about your father, eh?” Spencer taunted.

The second thing that Spencer had said had become intolerable for Walter. He stopped, turned back towards Donal and Spencer and flew with rage at them. Now was the time to use open Wellizen, Walter thought. His face became red with fury and he visualized himself pummeling Spencer. He walked closer to them, visualizing constantly. This time his try reaped fruits. When he was about ten meters close to them, Spencer’s head moved towards the right side, so suddenly that it appeared as if he was punched by some invisible man. But actually it was the sharpness of Walter’s radiations that did the trick. Spencer’s feet lost the touch of ground and he fell on the ground with a thud as if hit by some sudden unaccountable force, bleeding from the side of his jaw. Donal stood beside him, as if spell bound. After some time it struck him that actually Walter had used Wellizen. His eyes went wide with horror and he picked up Spencer in his arm. Walter meanwhile enjoyed his success. He had done something which he could not do even in normal conditions. He turned back to leave when Donal called out, “Walter, you shouldn’t have done it.”

“He shouldn’t have said what he said. Be glad that your jaw is safe yet.” Walter said, glowing with new confidence.

“Not because he was not wrong. But because his father is a rich man. He might get you out of the school.” Donal said looking at the unconscious Spencer. Walter remembered what Louis had told him and he really felt that Donal was right. *It’s all a game of money, my friend. The one, who holds*

money, holds power. Even though Walter felt that Donal was right, he didn't want to stoop in front of him. He turned back and went back to his dormitory.

Throughout the night, the danger vexed him and Spencer's wicked smile appeared in his dreams. He justified his moves in the sleep and shouted out to himself that he was left with no choice.

Although, the next morning was a festive morning, Walter felt weak and sluggish. Minutes after he got up from his bed, Louis came sprinting through to him with a large pile of gifts which he laid on Walter's bed.

"Where did you get that from?"

"That's mine. Got it from the post office. You know what; even my parents didn't forget to send me a gift. You may get yours too." He said and started unwrapping his gifts hastily.

Walter, seeing Louis in a merry mood, didn't tell him the last night's tidings and strolled towards the post office. When he outstretched his hand with the magnetic card, a package and an envelope came flying from the ditch. Many like him were sitting around the post office, unwrapping the gifts then and there. Walter felt for the package. It contained something soft. *It must be from my mother*, Walter thought. He ran to his chamber where Louis was still sitting, unwrapping his gifts. Walter too, unwrapped the package and took out the gift. It was a very small woolen cap, so small that it couldn't fit in Walter's head even when he applied complete pressure to get it in. Inside the cap was a small note written in handwriting surely not of his mother.

Dear Walter M.

A very merry Pojen. Your mother made this for you when you were an infant. I thought you should have it. I am sorry if it doesn't fit. Please keep this confidential, for your own security's sake.

Prof. J. Jackson

The letter was absurd and perhaps not meant for him, Walter thought. First of all, this Jackson had written Dear Walter M. What did that M stand for? Walter wondered. And second of all, he had never known a person called J.Jackson. Then how did he know him? Perhaps it was meant for some Walter M. He stuffed the cap back inside the package and put the lid back on. But then suddenly a thought struck him. If the letter wasn't meant for

him, then how did his magnetic card attract it? It shouldn't have because the stamp was exclusive for every student and his identity card would surely not attract anything else but the letter meant for him. Walter took out his card to have a look. Engraved in the centre of the card were the letters WALTER SMIT. What on Sistrovius was going on? Walter stood flabbergasted. He turned towards Louis who was busy in checking out his gifts to tell him all this but the words of the sender overpowered him. *Keep it confidential, for your own security's sake*, the letter said. The sender was distinct in telling Walter what he wanted him to do. He slipped the letter under his pocket and showed Louis the package, saying that it was sent by his mother and was made small by mistake.

After showing all his presents to Walter, Louis went out. Walter now left on his own, read and reread the letter. Its absurdity and irrelevance didn't decrease even after repeated reading. To divert his attention from the perplexing problem which now stood in front of him, Walter picked up the envelope which had stuck to his card along with the absurd package. He opened the letter and another unknown handwriting welcomed him.

Dear Walter,

A merry Pojen. I didn't want to face you and that is why I am sending this letter. Spencer is alright now and was ready to complaint about all this but I consoled him. You don't need to worry. He is not going to tell the episode to any outsider but he may get you surrounded and then punched any time. He is fuming in vengeance, so beware. If you want to thank me for preventing Spencer to tell anyone, I don't want to hear it. Now, we are foes, Walter and I hate you as much as you do. Save your nose. It's jeopardized.

Donal Mosbee

Although the letter was written in a highly aggressive format and targeted at horrifying Walter, Walter calmly read it once and then put it back in the envelope. He kept it down on the ground and most unexpectedly, trampled it underfoot until it lost the recognition of dried messaging leaf. He kept jumping on it and when at last he felt that the job had been done, he sat down on his bed. The fine pieces of dried leaf were lying in the center of his chamber and Walter stood up and mopped his chamber in concern for the neatness of his room. Walter was sure that though the letter said that his nose was in a danger, no harm would be done before the Pojen holidays. If any danger was expected, it was expected after Pojen holidays. Walter again picked up J.Jackson's package and stared at the cap. In the centre of the cap was written- 'Walter', with knitted wool. Walter put the cap and the letter

enclosed with the package in his safe and walked into Louis's chamber which was just left to his chamber.

"Can I ask you for your help Louis?" he said walking up to Louis's bed.

Louis was decorating his room with the toys that his parents had sent him and was busy with his own favorite toy car.

"Ask." Louis asked without looking up.

"Can you help me?"

"In what?" Louis asked, now sensing something amiss in Walter's tone.

"Can you help me in finding words which start from M?" Walter said with specious guile.

"Sure. But what for?"

"That's the condition. You won't ask questions." Walter said.

"Alright. Okay, well mall... mask..... master.... monotony..... my.....missus..... many.....mini....moron....malicious.....mad... motor—"

Louis said struggling to find words.

"Well thank you Louis. That'll do." Walter said and rushed back to his own room leaving Louis perplexed.

Once in his room Walter set himself to work. Out of the words that Louis had spoken, only five made sense to the use of 'm' in the letter- master, moron, malicious, mini and mad. He expelled malicious, mad and moron because he felt they were too cheap to use in a letter written by some professor and moreover why would J.Jackson, a complete stranger to Walter would use words like moron for him, he thought finalizing his moves. Even mini sounded senseless. In this case, the word that made most sense was master and still it was grotesque, knowing that it was used *after* Walter's name. Walter master sounded senseless too. He gave away and concentrated on that J.Jackson. *Who the hell is it*, Walter wondered. He could not tell anything to anyone. There was a threat to his own security, the sender had said. Another question was raising its feet in front of Walter. *Why didn't my mother send me anything? Where is she? Is she alright?* Walter wondered. Once again the faint memories of the past with his mother came flooding back to Walter's mind. Her good health and well being became a grave concern for Walter. He planned to write her a letter before going over to the Pojen function which was due to start after an hour. But for that he needed his mother's magnetic dust stamp. He headed towards the post office for getting the stamp. He stood in the line of students, all waiting to get the stamps of their receivers.

"May I get the stamp of Seph Smit, 24, Fryster Street." Walter said as his chance came.

The lady on the counter wrote this on her whazol and then replied, "I am sorry. The stamp is not available."

"Why not?"

"This person is not in Galnovio residential at the moment. So her identity card's permission for use has also been declined." The lady replied.

Walter moved out of the line, sad and hopeless. *If my mother is not in Galnovio residential, then where is she? She won't go wandering across the forests*, Walter thought. Suddenly, everything seemed grotesque and meaningless. He walked silently back to his room for getting ready for the morning Pojen get together after which students were allowed to leave the school campus. His mind remained riveted to the absurd letter and his mother's strange trip to somewhere outside without telling Walter. Although, he knew that his mother had clearly told him that she had to go somewhere, but this 'somewhere' was unknown which was the biggest problem which was vexing Walter. *One thing was sure, she has gone somewhere far, very far*. Walter thought. All obviously, Walter dressed up, wore his blue cloak over his uniform and then marched away to Louis's room.

"What are you doing?" Walter asked as he entered Louis's chamber. Louis was sitting on the floor with a big book, busily reading.

"Reading. I got this book as a present from sister. She is an architect." Louis said.

"What is it about?"

"It's about architectural technicality. It simply or rather perplexingly, deals with the wagaras serat architecture and the decoding of the various idols and paintings made in connection with the Dulen. A fascinating read." Louis said, beaming.

"Do you mean that those paintings and idols that Professor Mosbee said are meaningless for Galnovio have been decoded?" Walter said, suddenly interested.

"Yes Walter yes. I must say my sister has changed her writing style. Her writing was quite unrecognizable until I saw the name. Her present I think is the best. You can read it along with me if you want to. The words used here are difficult and I think that two minds work better than one. By discussion we can get to understand what this really means." Louis said, looking at the letter which had come along with the book.

"Who is the author?" Walter asked, bending closer to Louis.

"Not heard his name ever before and looking at the book it seems that he is quite a genius." Louis said, turning over to the first page of the book. "Here it is. Professor J.Jackson." he said.

A chill arose within Walter and he stared at the large golden book in which J.JACKSON was written in shining blue letters. So, this man was a book writer. A great book writer and in the letter that he had written to Walter, it seemed clear that he was a friend or a relative of his mother. But his mother had never mentioned any Jackson to him nor had Walter heard from any Jackson in previous Pojens. Then why did this man feel an urge to contact Walter now?

“What happened?” Louis said, seeing Walter lost.

“Can I read the author’s biography? It must be given in the beginning if the book is published.” Walter asked.

“That’s the biggest mystery man. This book is not published. It’s written by the man in his own handwriting rather than in the in the organic colors standard handwriting. If this book is not published, then where did she get it from? She has written this too, most perplexing- Keep it within you two, no one else, for your own security’s sake.” Louis said, showing him the letter.

Things were preposterous, really preposterous, Walter thought. The story had taken another turn. The letter written to Louis was in the same handwriting as the one written to Walter by J.Jackson. Then J.Jackson had written this letter in disguise of Louis’s sister. Still, it was too big a risk.

“Contact your sister immediately and ask her all these questions which are arising out of it.” Walter said, seeing that this was the lone way to ensure whether Louis’s sister had written the letter and sent the book or someone else.

“Oh no! I can’t. She resides nowhere because she wanders across Galnovio to investigate ancient building’s architecture and the secrets hidden, if any, in its architecture. She has made a roaming identity card and her dust stamp cannot be available.” Louis said.

Clear and distinct, Walter thought. The letter then was surely written by that J.Jackson and he was the one who had sent his book, why, Walter could not tell. It was distinct that the man was desperate in getting Walter to see the book and still he hadn’t given it to Walter straight away. Perhaps he wanted Louis to know it too. There was a difference between the last statements of the letters that Jackson had written to Walter and Louis. In the letter to Louis, Jackson had asked him to keep the letter between ‘you two’. Who was this ‘you two’, Walter could not tell. Perhaps Louis and himself. On the other hand, in the letter to Walter, Jackson had asked him to keep it confidential and to himself only.

“Walter, its time we get going. The function is about to start.” Louis said, getting up. Walter walked along with him to the central hall where the Pojen celebrations were supposed to take place. The school pillars were decorated

by long and beautiful ribbons and delight was in the air. The red badges that all the children wore, glimmered in contrast to their blue uniforms. The central hall seemed entirely different from the first day that the first years had seen it. In the front of the hall was a big ice carved statue of Morence in a meditation posture. All around the hall was the complete epic of Morenlo-Galnovian holy book, all in a picture format carved on wood. Within minutes, the whole school assembled and stood silent, waiting for Professor Loryet's speech to begin. He till now hadn't come and many more teachers were missing which gave everyone a faint feeling that Professor Loryet was presiding over a staff meeting- a disaster for the students. Walter and Louis stood silent, both of them in their own field of thoughts (both being great thinkers.) Walter's mind was still riveted to the book that Jackson had sent them and he knew that the book carried something that the sender wanted Walter to know. Louis had said that it carried the decoding of the paintings and idols that the Wise men had made in order to simplify the entry in the Dulen. Then, did Jackson want Walter to know the entry to Dulen? If yes, then why? Questions like this came flooding into Walter's mind and he waited anxiously for the function to end so that he could have a look at the book, back in Louis's chamber. Louis on the other hand was thinking of the greatness of his sister to send him an unpublished book and knowing all about Louis's affairs as she had written- 'Keep it within you two'. That meant that she knew that Louis had only one friend- Walter.

In the meanwhile, Professor Harles had taken the center stage, very near to ice carved Morence.

"Good Morning everyone. A very merry Pojen to all of you. I have nothing special to say so we will start straight away with the prayer." He said kneeling down and closing his eyes.

"Close your eyes and kneel down." He said in a merely audible whisper.

Every one held jiopys in their hands which were given to them few minutes ago and did as Professor had said.

"We all kneel in the service of Morence." Professor said and then they all broke into a prayer which was the first thing that they had learnt at Plendisecort.

*From soil and from the sky,
From lakes and our destinations lie nigh,
From the rills and the crags,*

*We arise,
And move towards the essence,
In the service of mighty Morence.*

*To say is not to do,
To imagine is not to work,
To fall is not to lose,
And to die is not to end,
For the soul lives on,
It changes its form,
But lives on,
Being aware of the mighty presence,
In the service of supreme Morence.*

*Glimmer will arise out of darkness,
In Morence's vastness,
Our destinations will be reached,
And are missions shall be fulfilled,
The golden day awaits us,
But to reach that day,
We will have to pass through torrents,
In the service of mighty Morence.*

For some time, everyone remained silent just as Professor Loryet but then some children started looking up, partly opening their eyes to see the Professor and to update themselves. After some time Professor Harles stood up, his hands folded and his eyes shut in a saintly manner. The whole school did just as he did.

"We may start our short program now." Professor Harles said finally opening his eyes.

The short program included a few soporific speeches and religious songs sung by senior children. Walter remained absorbed in his reverie which was now proving to be somnolent. The program ended with a folk dance from senior girls which proved to be most interesting for most of the boys.

"Now, it's time to part. We are parting temporarily and we would meet again. I say goodbye to all the students who are leaving Plendisecort for the Pojen holidays and I hope that they would return back in good health and cheerful spirits." Professor Harles said after all the items of the show were over. He waved brightly to all children who departed from the hall in

asymmetrical lines. Walter and Louis headed towards their chamber in an ultimate sprint. On the way, Walter saw Donal and Spencer going out of the main gate with big suitcases. Walter chuckled to himself on seeing Spencer's bandaged nose and disfigured side jaw. He told the complete incidence to Louis on the way. Louis was so surprised that he could not believe that Walter had used Wellizen in the open so easily. He complained loudly for not taking him when Walter had gone practicing. He wanted to have a look at Professor Mosbee's son. Walter could not guess why Louis thought that Donal was some celebrity or something. A crooked moron he was, according to Walter. Walter followed Louis to his chamber where they opened the book that they had just received that day. The one thing that they now wanted to do was to read that the book. Walter, knowing the truth, felt an even greater urge to read the book which the author so badly wanted him to read.

On the very first page of the book was a painting that perhaps the author had made himself in an attempt to produce a replica of the Wise men's painting. In the center of the picture was a bird, its left wing bent awkwardly towards the left and the right wing missing entirely. It was just flying on the basis of its one wing and that too was disfigured. Its eyes were facing towards the front and its beak was red. In the background was a mountain, huge but awkward. Its top was bent to the left towards the bird's left wing and it seemed as if the mountain top and the bird's left wing is the same. Walter and Louis kept on staring at the picture and then turned over the page to look at the description of the picture by the author. The page read-

This is the first painting made by the Gyjítions, as I would call the Wise men. Actually, all the paintings were arranged in the order in which the Gyjítions wanted Galnovians to read them. I would follow the same order and automatically, the light will dawn upon the reader after the last idol has been explained.

Now, this painting has a dual meaning and is the simplest of the lot. (Walter and Louis didn't seem to think so. For them, the painting was most weird.) The bird's left wing signifies the Dulen. The bird's right wing is missing which shows that there can be no duplicate or replacement of the original Dulen. The body of the bird signifies Sistrovious, the planet where Dulen exists. The bird's red peak signifies that the sole purpose

of the creation of the Dulen is to reduce bloodshed, red being the color of blood but this is just used as a hypothesis; the real meaning might be different. (Just for the information of the reader, everything here is hypothetical and there can be myriad explanations to simplify the painting but the most obvious and appropriate one has been chosen.) The tilted top of the mountain and its camouflage with the bird's left wing in the background signifies the fusion of nature with the Dulen. The Dulen is administered and secured by Mother Nature. I proclaim that this is one of the paintings that the Gyjítóns had made in order to fool the interpreter and to ensure better security.

With that, the note on the first painting ended. Walter and Louis looked up at each other, admiring the author's supreme interpretation.

"What does he mean by, nature administers the Dulen?" Walter asked.

"Perhaps that there are some kind of beasts or something which stand in front of the Dulen."

"Yah. Perhaps." Walter said, looking lost.

"Should we go on?" Louis asked.

"Sure."

They turned over the page to see a painting of an idol, some sort of deity. Her left hand was stretched towards the sky and there was a fire torch in her hand. Her eyes were riveted to the reader itself and wherever you set your eyes, you would feel that the deity is staring back at you. Moreover, just like the previous painting, this deity too had no right hand. In the background, nothing was distinct and they left the interpretation task to the author itself by turning over the page almost immediately.

This is one of the most meaningful and important deity that the Gyjítóns made. The torch in the left hand and the eyes of the goddess staring right back to the reader clearly signify that though, the Dulen starts with a two way, one perpendicularly above the person and one right in front of him, the right one is the upper one as the torch signifies brightness. Dulen, once again can only be entered by that upper way, which is shown

by the missing right hand. Another mind numbing thing is the background. If one has a good pair of eyes, one can clearly see something written in the background. Though I can very easily interpret it, I cannot express what's in the background because this book may fall in the wrong hands. This shows us that this 'something' is necessary for the entry in the Dulen.

Walter and Louis hurriedly turned the page back to see if they could interpret something. For some time, their efforts seemed futile but soon, they started seeing through the background. The background spelled a word!



“Don’t you thing it is N-E- something in the end?” Walter said, staring at the strange background. Through the deity, these words were merely visible. The deity posed right in front of the other letters and it became very difficult to see the rest of the words. Louis kept on staring at the background, rubbing his head.

“Can’t make it.” Louis finally said. Walter too kept staring at the faintly visible words that Louis had interpreted. He stared hard, his eyesight being sharper than Louis. Just then the partial light of enlightenment dawned upon him and he gasped in wonder at the inexplicable concealment.

Walter now was smiling, still looking at the background.

“I got it, Louis. You got those two words right. The word is M-A-G-N-E-T. Magnet. M is hardly visible and yet distinct. Great!” Walter said overwhelmingly.

“My dear Morence. Does that mean that we need a magnet for entering the Dulen? As simple as that?” Louis asked, faintly shocked at such superior camouflage.

“Don’t underestimate the Gyjitons. They have proved to be perplexing even for the greatest of people.” Walter said, admiring the painting and the idol.

Once again they turned over the page, tiredly though. Louis had proposed closing the book earlier too but Walter wanted to continue and his opinion was strong enough for Louis to accept.

The next page carried another painting, just as preposterous as the earlier ones. It represented a man with large ferocious eyes, glaring right back at the interpreter. His palms were open and faced each other in front of his belly button. His mouth was open as if he wanted something to eat and yet it looked as if his mouth was open not for eating but it signified something.

“Wait, wait. I think I know what this one signifies. Let’s check our observation skills too, shouldn’t we?” Louis said just when Walter was turning over the page. “I think those two hands facing each other shows that the Gyjitons and Nature works in coordination. The left hand must be showing the Dulen and the right hand must be Nature. What do you say?”

For some time Walter kept quite and then said, “It may be so. But what about those glaring eyes and the open mouth.” Louis too found these two parts of the painting a bit grotesque. He didn’t reply and just turned over the page.

A master piece, I would call this one. The hint that it gives is baffling and yet so unattainable. This has been the level where most of the Dulen intruders failed, unable to understand the intricate meaning of the puzzle. The two hands of this painting’s man are so very significant. We all know that in a ‘something’, opposites attract and the likes repel. The palms of his hands face each other and by the symbological knowledge that I have attained by working on the Gyjitons, I can affirm that the open palms mean that ‘something’ that the reader, I hope, has interpreted from the previous painting, in which likes attract and opposites repel is required to pierce the Dulen. However improbable it might seem, the open mouth suggests the entry of the Dulen which can only be opened by this magnet. The glaring eyes target at the interpreter.

“I hope you have guessed how terribly wrong you were.” Walter said smiling lightheartedly. Louis merely gasped and stared at the description.

“I think Walter it is enough for the day. I am already finding myself overburdened today. We also have got the Global Cup and you know how really poor we are at Stiphel.” Louis said. Walter got up briskly and walked off towards his chamber, his mind cluttered with thoughts. Did Jackson want Walter to know how to pierce Dulen? If yes, then why? Walter wondered.

After working for nine days on Stiphel and Wellizen, Walter and Louis had improved considerably. They used to get up as early as five a.m. to work in the fields for Wellizen which they thought could be done best in the early hours of the morning. After that they used to have their hurried breakfasts just beside the Stiphel field after which they had their Stiphel practices in the absence of coaches which they took as a boon. For them, the presence of the coach was more like an impediment than any help. The tiresome morning was then replaced by a restful noon as well as afternoon. Their efforts in the morning were so tiring that they just used to fall on their beds as soon as they entered their chambers and succumbed to a slumber which broke only in the evenings. Studies were a distant worry for them and their sole attention lied in Global Cup. Even the book that the unknown J.Jackson had sent to them was thrown in a dusty corner of Walter's room and wasn't opened after the Pojen evening. Walter had attained substantial success in Wellizen on the basis of which he could comb his hair without ever touching them, tie the laces of his shoes while reading Stiphel Guide and could open his door while fighting with Louis for a pie. At Stiphel, after early failures, Louis as well as Walter had improved and could survive on the ring at good enough a speed. They could use their bats efficiently and could use the magnet which was allowed to use only once to jump towards the center of the ring to hit the ball harder. The ring's speed too had increased and they had planned many tricks to make to their opponents lose balance. They called these tricks by code names which they had exclusively developed. Now today the holidays had ended and the students had started coming back to school with tearful faces caused by the parting from their parents. Walter was repeatedly struck by his mother's unavailability right from Pojen and her last letter. He repeatedly asked the post mistress whether his mother had come but his tries till now had been futile. Louis on the other hand was thinking more of the Global Cup and had improved in Stiphel and Wellizen too. Now Walter and Louis were sitting on their breakfast table, staring gloomily at their porridge.

"Do you think Spencer will get my nose broken?" Walter said. This question had been gnawing him from quite some time, since he had seen Spencer and Donal enter the school campus with Spencer's nose still battered.

"I don't think so. And even if he does, you are good enough at Wellizen to break his leg this time." Louis said indifferently.

“No, this time I don’t want any violence. To be frank enough, now I don’t hate them as much as I used to. It’s just that I want to stay away from them. No vengeance.” Walter said.

“Oh! Yes. I understand. Just like a noble man, eh?”

“No. Not exactly. Just like Walter Smit, to be precise.” Walter said, getting up for their classes. The classes began that day after the holidays and ended today itself to start with the Global Cup. Just before this conversation, Walter and Louis had talked heavily about their moves in their match which would be chosen by the chit method and had come to the conclusion that they would be invincible. Looking at their hard work, there was nothing to deny it. They really were brilliant but yet one problem had been around them for almost all the time they were practicing- Louis’s glasses. Louis had a heavy myopia and he found it very difficult to see the ball which came from the other side of the ring towards him, hit by his opponent, without his glasses. Wearing his glasses made him less athletic and it was Walter who had made the frame of a totally non athletic person, somewhat athletic and Louis’s glasses were the biggest impediment in their Global Cup success. In the practice time, Louis used to take out his glasses but this made him just like a blind kid and Walter could do nothing but to let him wear his large glasses. Even now the solution to this problem was unknown and rather not thought of.

The classes more or less were free and even Professor Loryet didn’t come to take their class, the reason, once again, unknown. Professor Harles, in the beginning had seemed an impressive young man but his attitude had undergone a complete make over in the last few days. He smiled much less and his brain most of the time seemed riveted to some other job. The evening came quickly after a fun day in which most of the time the upcoming Global Cup was discussed. Once again, Walter and Louis went to the Stiphel ring to practice, now in the presence of the coaches. That day the coaches praised them (of course, according to them, for they had worked harder than they had done even while learning Sistros for the first time.) In a match that they both played against the coaches, the coaches won but they highly praised Walter and Louis for holding on, the way they had done, calling this technique of holding on even in sure loss times- formula number 54, according to them. They retired to bed earlier to prepare themselves for the biggest dream that they ever had dreamt- the dream of defeating Rublus and Gursled, indirectly defeating money, as they called it. That very evening, Professor Loryet made an announcement that skiing would not be a part of Global Cup qualifier because of short time and adverse conditions. Walter enjoyed this announcement when he saw the sullen face of Donal, he

being the Rublus skiing player. There would be no chance for him to play, Walter chuckled. Better luck next time man.

Sitting in the plush bedroom of her mansion in Morfonso Lane, Nesphereo in the late hours of night; Seph Smit drowsed off. Her eyes became heavy with the weight of Walter's responsibilities and her husband's arrival worries. The bedroom was nothing like the bedroom of her Galnovian residence which was more like a hole when compared to this one. Its brilliant chandeliers illuminated the room much better than the Galnovian jiopys and made the room nothing less than a princess's room in a royal palace. In one corner of the room was an air conditioner, a unique object which was entirely unknown in Galnovio. In another corner was a television, still kept on, showing some kind of specially gifted human pummeling a thug, the television being another monopoly for Nesphereo.

Although Seph Smit tried her very best to stay awake, her efforts were marred by the overpowering lore of sleep which settled over her for some time during which her head went down, swinging from one side to the other and when that attack back stepped, once again, she started staring gloomily at the television. A timid knock on the front door of the mansion awoke her from another assault of sleep. For some time, she made no reaction and put the television mute to ensure that she really had heard something. Once again from the front door came a knock, this time a bit more forceful. Seph Smit got up from her bed and walked through the passage into the drawing room. Another beautiful place, it was. Seven chandeliers were hung in seven different dimensions of the room and big imperial sofas were arranged marvelously in the room. Seph Smit opened the lights and walked towards the door. She reached very close to the door and opened the small television which was fitted right beside the door, showing a person standing on the other side of the door, waiting. Seph Smit heaved a sigh and opened the door noiselessly. The street outside was pitch dark and only a man stood in front, occupying the front space. He smiled at Seph Smit and entered the door holding Seph from her wrist.

"You are late honey." Seph Smit said, in English.

"I know, Seph, I am sorry. The government is taking disastrous steps against Galnovio which I am sure would bring about the complete destruction of both the zones. Whatever, I have to follow His directions. My moves become even more complicated for me when I realize that I have the 'Most Wanted' criminal along with me at home." Mr. Smit said, lightheartedly. But

Seph Smit didn't seem to take it as a joke. Her jaw dropped and her brows clouded to a frown.

"So now you too think that I am a criminal, Garol. You know Garol, whenever you are not around; a terrible insecurity terrifies me which forces my mind into pessimistic reveries. And do you know, every time there is even the slightest of noise from the front door, my heart throbs as if somebody is hammering it."

Garol Smit put his hand on Seph's shoulder but she drove it away.

"I am sorry, Seph. You seem to overreact. Lower your voice, someone may overhear-"

"I am overreacting, eh? How heartless can people turn! I put my life at stake for the boy and for you and you think I am overreacting! Do I not have the right to retort?"

"Of course you have the right to react, Seph but do you realize that I was just kidding and even if we want to debate, can we continue it after dinner as I think you can quite well see that I am starving?" Mr. Smit said, setting his bag down. Seph Smit didn't return a word and walked away towards her modular kitchen. She opened the refrigerator and served the food cold to her husband. After banging the plate on the dining table, she stalked towards the bedroom again.

"Tastes of love marriages." Mr. Smit said to himself, warming his dinner himself and then joining oblivious Seph Smit for sleep.

After some three hours of sleep, Mr. Smit was woken up by the doorbell from the front door which made him sit bolt upright. *Who the hell could it be?* He thought. He looked at his watch. 12:34 am. His insides started throbbing. He pushed Seph to rouse her. She partly opened her eyes. There the doorbell rung again. Seph Smit too sat up as soon as she heard it.

"Who can it be, Garol?" she asked, her mind not believing it to be real.

"I don't know. I will go and see. You hide somewhere." Mr. Smit said, getting up. Every inch of Seph Smit seemed to be preparing itself for the last moments of freedom. All sorts of pessimistic thoughts came flooding to her mind. She got up from her bed and walked nervously towards the bathroom, the only hiding place. She entered the bathroom, hid behind the door and bolted it. Some sense of security fell over her even when she knew that the impediment that she had put was too easy for her foes to pass through. There, Garol Smit walked nervously towards the door. The person outside was surely getting impatient now, Garol thought. He opened the small television to see their guest. The television was connected to a camera which

gave live image of the part outside the door. But most surprisingly, the television gave no display. Only pink colored screen was seen and seeing this Garol, too started getting impatient. Someone had covered the camera with something to prevent the host to see him beforehand. Garol could not find the energy to open the door even though he was holding the knob in his hand, just needed to be twisted, the lock was already broken and that too by the guest. He gave a final push to his bravery which appeared to give away and opened the door. The seen that he saw brought all his worries to life and this seen was perhaps the worst he had ever seen in his life.

Walter awoke with a start, his insides lurching. He lazily picked up his Lom dial and extended his hand towards the rising Lom the shadow of the dial appeared between six and seven. Two hours more and he would be on Stiphel ring for his match, Walter thought. He stood ready, knocking against Louis's chamber. A battered face of Louis appeared. His head was scarred and his nose was out of symmetry.

"What on Sistrovius happened to your face?" Walter asked still staring at his friend's disastrous look.

"The same old Donal and Spencer trick. They left you and targeted me Morence knows for what!!!" Louis said limping to his bed.

Walter was fuming with anger "When did this happen?"

"Yesterday just after you left I walked over to the lawns for some more practice when I saw those two devils. They came and knocked me off. For performing Wellizen I needed to concentrate but both of them kept on kicking me and pummeling me. They targeted my feet. Of course they wanted to prevent me from playing Stiphel today. I drove them away somehow but I think it was too late. The most surprising fact was that no one saw three figures fighting with each other, splattered with mud. I would say that they succeeded in their wicked intentions. I can hardly walk and speak and my left eye is bulging like a balloon."

"So you can't play?" Walter asked hoping Louis to say no.

"I don't think so".

"Meaning that you can't play or meaning that my previous statement was wrong?"

"Meaning that I can play." Louis said smiling but not too emphatically.

Although he was fuming with rage, Walter grinned at Louis who grinned back, got up and disappeared out of his chamber to get ready for the game.

Walter and Louis became the representatives for Burlino after eight years of nothingness. In all the previous eight years of Global Cup, Burlino had no representative until the last instant due to which it was disqualified every time out of the competition. Rain had fallen after eight years of drought and it had fallen hard, for Burlino.

Walter and Louis now stood in the dressing room to get ready for their game which was just selected by chit method to be held with Gursled. Walter had clenched his fists as soon as he had heard this. He badly wanted to have a match with Rublus. His blue robes now had brown badges with a roaring finnil in the center of it. The finnil was glowing bright by the jipys on its feathers. Louis came hobbling towards him, his face carried a painful look and his eyes were locked with Walter's.

"Walter, I am really sorry but my condition is worse than I thought it is. Do you really think I can play?" Louis asked doubtfully.

"At least you can try and play." Walter said tying his shoelaces using Wellizen.

"You know I just went over to the ring to see if I could do something."

"And you couldn't do anything?"

"I am afraid not much." Louis said, picking up his bat.

Walter didn't say anything and picked up his bat to get ready for going to the Stiphel field for the match. His expressions were rigid and he felt a fume of rage within him. He had planned to pummel Donal and Spencer after defeating them in the Stiphel match but his plan had crashed into ruins when Burlino was decided to have a match against Gursled and not Rublus. Walter didn't know that Spencer and Donal were not representing Rublus in Stiphel and Makor Gartet with Reswad Kijester were representing it. On the other side of the dressing room, Gursled players got ready with their green badges and blue robes. Both the teams mounted the ARV which rose gently, taking them towards an unknown location where they were supposed to have their match. This Stiphel field was kept unknown and was only used for holding the special matches.

The ARV cruised through a series of a close mountains and dense forests.

Though the sites below were picturesque, all the occupants of the ARV riveted their minds towards the upcoming game. The Gursled players sat in the extreme left of the ARV talking amongst themselves and Walter and

Louis sat in the extreme right peeping nervously out of the window. A five minute journey took them to a beautiful spot to the east of Plendisecort main academic building, generally called the Maruar literally meaning mirage. It was a small clearance between a dense forest and the Stiphel ring which stood in the centre of this clearance was surrounded by high stands for the spectators. Walter and Louis walked towards the ring once the ARV had landed. A terrifying sight welcomed them, all around the Stiphel ring, in the high stands were students waving and cheering for the favorite of the match-Gursled. *No supporters for us*, Walter thought. As expected, the stands were full of green banners and all around them Walter couldn't see even a single brown banner in the crowd of green. Walter ignored Edward Setotly's big grin and picked up his bat. The commentator announced "Welcome one and all to the Maruar. Let's see if both the teams are ready for the first match of the global cup qualifier". He waited to see both the teams approach the ring and his eyes brightened once he saw the brown badges on Walter and Louis. "This time we have representatives for Burlino. Remarkable indeed!! So we are going to have a match. Grab hold of your seats, get your popcorns and watch intently because this is going to be fun!"

"A hyperbole I am afraid, shaggy." shouted someone from the crowd.

"Oh well!! Let's see. Both teams please take your respective places on the ring."

Louis limped along with Walter and stopped in front of the heath which separated the ring from them. They lazily took out their magnets. A strong force pushed them and they sped towards the ring. At the correct time they turned their magnets over a repelling force slowed them and they landed on the ring comfortably. *The same feeling of slipperiness*, Walter felt they skated their way to their side of the ring and occupied the semicircle, according to their strategy. Walter was planned to control the ring from the centre and Louis was to give it a harder push from the edge. They had enlisted some two hundred formulas to get their opponent off the ring, but their success chiefly depended on Louis. Louis had not worn his glasses and found it difficult to see the approaching ball which came with a wrecking force. He had terrible wounds on his left leg and found it difficult to control the ring.

"Are we ready??" asked Shaggy Polkig. Both the teams nodded.

Two strong looking hefty boys stood against Walter and Louis and with the crowd supporting the Gursled, it became even difficult for them to concentrate. On either side of the ring, through the diameter of the ring, stood two large poles which had a stick put on it used to mark the boundaries

between the two teams. Walter stood in the center of their semicircle and Louis on its edge, close to the end of their part. Their opponents took some time to settle on the ring and after they had done it, the crowd broke in the cheering for Gursled.

“So, there we go! Three.....Two.....One..... and GO!!” shaggy said, through his bushy beard.

Walter gave the ring a gentle push and it rotated gently, slipping through his legs, giving him a strange creepy feeling. Everything became silent. Louis gave it a push too and their opponents started work. They gently flicked the ring through their athletic legs and the ring rotated with Walter controlling it. For some time, nothing happened. Walter still controlled the ring and the opponents comfortably helped the ring on its way to keep themselves going. But then, very suddenly, one of the Gursled players shouted, “OFF WE GO!!” and started pushing the ring on it’s way. The ring rotated faster now and Louis had to struggle with his hurt leg to keep up with the pace of the ring. *The control of the ring is passing to them*, Walter thought. The ring still was slow enough to catch up with and fast enough to make a person who jumps on it suddenly, fall. Now the crowd had gone completely silent as was the rule while a match was going on. Walter tried hard to regain the control of the ring to him but the player who was playing on the edge for Gursled was doing a good job. He was sliding the ring hard on its way to their part. And suddenly, like cannonballs exploding from cannon, small tennis ball like things jumped from the center of the ring, a hollow part and bounced towards the Gursled players. Before Walter and Louis could defend themselves with their bats, the balls struck them hard on the head, nose, legs, stomach and even on eyes hit by their opponents with the bats. Although, the balls didn’t hurt too much, they were good enough for one when one is standing on a ring, so slippery that it can you off itself just like a mad bull refusing to be tamed. Louis got many shots on his fresh wounds and every time this happened he howled loudly. The most surprising thing of the lot was that all the balls that appeared from the center only bounced to the Gursled part and consequently, Gursled players got all the opportunities of getting Walter and Louis off the ring. *Perhaps the balls go to the players who have the control on the rotation of the ring*, Walter thought. He got to retain the control. He stared at his legs, gently moving to keep up with the pace of the ring. He then looked at Louis, his face was pale and the pain that he was feeling was distinctly comprehensible. No plan that both had made came to his mind and desperation seized him. All this time, balls hit him hard everywhere; his opponents mercilessly moved their bats. *Some formula must be used*, Walter thought.

“Come on, Louis, formula number fifty seven.” He shouted even when he couldn’t remember what it was. Louis turned towards him, his legs still keeping up, his eyes were gloomy and his body pitiful. He was trembling all over with pain and could just slightly move his neck, on the verge of tears, as if he wanted to say, “No Walter. I cannot go on.” Pain was overpowering him and any moment he could stop moving his legs, Walter felt. But even before, anything of that sort could happen; a ball came with crushing force and hit Louis on his jaw. Louis fell in the heath, ascending to some height by the force of the ball which hit him and disappeared in the darkness. Everything was over, Walter thought. If your partner is gone, you lose. Sure enough, his side of the ring shattered, and he too fell in the heath, away from the crowd which was cheering for the win of Gursled and away from the world. For a moment Walter wondered why this heath didn’t end in darkness, in death. He fell on something soft, which reduced the effect of the height from which he had fallen. Louis wasn’t there, beside him. A small plump man came emerged from an entrance which Walter couldn’t even see and said, “Lost, eh? Well, come. I will lead you out. It’s the other way, you see. You must know that there is a custom that the loser must not be present when the winner is celebrating. To ensure this, I will take you through this way, a long way though, I am afraid.”

“Where is Louis?” Walter asked.

“Your partner? I have taken him to the hospital. I tell you, he was shattered from within. Heavy injuries, I would say.” said the plump man as they ascended up a staircase.

“Will he be alright soon?” Walter asked gloomily. The sadness of losing the match was replaced by concern for his friend and he hardly cared about the loss, now, until he sees his friend, healthy and bright.

“Yes, young man. Very soon. There is nothing seriously wrong with him. Just a few wounds to bandage.” The plump man lied.

That was comforting for Walter and once again his mind returned to their humiliating loss. They had worked hard and that moron Donal and Spencer had spoiled everything. Once again, Walter felt a searing rage within him and the only thing he could do was clench his fists and remember the moment when he had punched Spencer, by Wellizen. *Wellizen*. The next competition was Wellizen. Gursled versus Burlino. Walter had higher hopes in Wellizen but he knew that everything depended on Louis’s health. He was Walter’s partner at Wellizen too. If they would win this one, they would win four points. And if in the match against Rublus, they win in Stiphel as well as Wellizen, they would win the Global Cup qualifier, Walter thought. Lot

of hard work was required. The imagination of he punching the air and the ground with Louis came to his mind which helped him feel better.

“Here we are. You go straight after this, young man and you will find yourself in front of your tunnel entrance, back door. You wouldn’t ever know the back door of all three houses arises from Maruar.” the plump man grinned. Walter hadn’t even known and he was out of that terrible heath. His thoughts had arrested him. *The same old Burlino folks in that tunnel, the same old Edward Setotly.* Walter thought as he approached the Burlino tunnel. The grinning face of Edward Setotly appeared in his mind and he felt like punching him in his mind itself. He opened the tunnel door and staggered on. The sight that he saw was most surprising for him. In the center of the leisure room, in the large sofas, sat all the boys including the stupid Edward Setotly, absolutely quite and grim.

Edward approached Walter as soon as he came closer to him and said, “Hey Walter. I am sorry. We all are sorry. We didn’t really understand how serious you were about all this. I say you played quite superb man. Just hard luck. We would surely win the next time. I am with you. We all are with you. No more kidding on this topic at least guys.” He said, most seriously, smiling. Walter smiled back at them and they wildly jumped at him, pouring consoling speeches and praises. Something had come out of Louis’s and his efforts, Walter thought, rejoicing the moment.

Two days had passed since Burlino’s loss to Gursled and Louis was still in hospital. It was a quite morning and they were having the Wellizen duel the next day. A diffident knock on the front door arose Louis who was sleeping. He limped to the door and a grinning face of Walter greeted him.

“How are you champ?” Walter asked concernedly.

“Fine.”

“I went over to the lawns to practice. Surprisingly enough, Spencer and Donal were there too. They didn’t dare come near me and vanished as soon as I came. I wanted to punch that moron Spencer again. I will.....I will...” Walter said just he had been saying from the last two days to cheer Louis up but his efforts seemed futile.

“I am sorry Walter.”

“What for?”

“I was the one because of whom we lost against Gursled.”

“And what makes you feel that?”

“I lost patience.”

“Louis, I understand what it feels like when one is repeatedly hit on his previous wounds.” Walter said, even when he didn’t understand at all.

“Our Wellizen match is tomorrow, isn’t it?” Louis asked.

“Yah. But I am thinking of withdrawing our name from it. We are not in a position to get in a duel.”

“Are you insane? Why in Morence’s name are you doing that?” Louis got up violently.

“Louis, I can’t afford to see my friend in such mess after every match that we play. It would be better not to play.”

“Walter, I am ready to have the match and when I am feeling all right, you really don’t need to worry. We will fight and we will win.” Louis got up and hit Walter with a light tap on his head using his Wellizen. Without even touching Walter, he had got a tap on his head, quite amazingly.

Walter grinned after a bewildered moment. Louis was still standing with his hand stretched out towards Walter in the attacking posture. They had learnt from the Wellizen guide that the best posture to attack is by stretching the hand out towards the victim with the palm facing him.

“Great man! Superb!”

“I know you are better. We can play a lot of tricks which one can surely not learn without using that guide. I promise I won’t give away this time.” Louis smirked.

Back in Marane Street, Professor Loric Hanison jogged around the cluster of houses, closely placed, just like innumerable ants which huddle together to gather food. After completing four rounds of his indistinct track, Loric Hanison reentered his house. He walked towards his bedroom and after refreshing himself by a cup of tea, set himself to work on his study table. He took out a wooden box, painted golden and carved. His hands trembled to take out another wooden box, half the size of the previous one with two earphone like things coming out of it from two wires which began somewhere from the inside. This was the latest discovery of Nesphereo- the frequency security system. The two earphones which stuck out from the box were used to record the frequencies of the vibrations that the ear produced from the user’s ears. It was an efficient security system as the frequencies of the vibrations produced by the ear was different for every human and only the user could open the box once the frequency was set. The frequency was set in small memory card slot which varied according to the size of the box. It was some two thousand kilobytes in this one. Loric Hanison had specially

smuggled this box from Nesphereo because the information that he was going to deliver through this box needed security, ultimate and supreme. If by any chance anyone, except the person to whom this information was meant, would open the box, the world will be destroyed yet another time by the horrors of war between Galnovio and Nesphereo. But a problem posed in front of him and it seemed really difficult to sort it out. How would he get the frequency of the vibrations of the person who was supposed to get the box? He could not hand the box over to the person straight away; the whole plan would be destroyed and he could not think of any other way to send the box to the receiver then by writing it in his will. His will would surely be obeyed and there was no danger of anyone trying to know what it was. Loric Hanison knew that his end was drawing near. It was sure and expected. Nespherean invasion. Moreover, even if Nesphereo doesn't invade Galnovio, he would be killed by his own people. He knew he had betrayed his people and he deserved it and yet he had done all for the best. No one understood this, though. No one knew. And the lone person who knew it was in an unapproachable place on Sistrovius.

He got up and walked towards his store room by climbing staircase, a collection of mess of centuries. Still, there were lying the shoes that Professor Mortati had used in Galnovio when he had used the same house and had left it behind. Many other things including his glimmering watch were lying in this place. Loric Hanison fought his way through this mess and reached the end of this store. He stood in this stinking corner, staring blankly on the floor. He then, lifted a dusty carpet which covered the floor to unveil a small hole looking like a tunnel entrance. It indeed was *the* tunnel's entrance. *The demon's tunnel*, Loric Hanison smirked. On the entrance were a small keypad and three keyholes. Loric Hanison locked the tunnel's entrance using three golden keys. He punched the keypad. The screen in front of it sparkled to life.

Nesphereo Entrance
Professor Loric Hanison
The door to success

Please enter the seventeen alphabet code:

Loric Hanison once again punched the key pad. Once again the screen glimmered.

Welcome to myself.

Loric Hanison smiled. All the programming was done just for himself. He knew that the first reaction that one will show on seeing the request that the screen makes. *Seventeen alphabet code? What the hell?* But the code was easy enough to remember and good enough to flabbergast a person. He had

used everything so very well managed and systematic. His codes were so easy to remember and yet so difficult. He relocked the tunnel's electronics lock by punching some buttons on the keypad. He walked back to his room, put the three keys in the smaller advanced security box and closed the bigger box on top of it. Still the problem of getting the frequency of vibration of the receiver vexed him and he worked upon a plan to accomplish his purpose. After completing this task he set himself on work again in his study, to write his will. In the meanwhile, the box rested in its safe.

In the Burlino tunnel of the first years' dormitories of Plendisecort, Walter sat in the leisure room with all his mates, wishing him and Louis, luck for the competition. Nory Solido, the geek was most surprisingly useful. He told them about many tricks that he had learnt and even taught them.

"You can send a spark of red, blue, yellow and black with advanced Wellizen. They are called by the technical terms but these terms are rather tough to remember. So, just visualize yourself sending sparks of these colors and you will do greatly. And yah, always stretch your palm towards the victim before attacking. This will initiate your moves. Good Luck." He said just when Walter and Louis were about to go to get ready for the match. In Wellizen, there was no house dress for different houses and all the houses had to wear the same black uniform with loose trousers and tight bases.

In the evening, just before the match, after spending wretched ten minutes in the dressing room, Walter and Louis sat in the ARV with their opponents, sitting in the corner of the small compartment, talking deeply. Walter and Louis were talking too, about the techniques that Nory Solido had told them. They were fantasizing and immensely took their fancy. Sending sparks like a jet of light and that too of various colors, just like a conjurer. This time too they were going towards the Maruar but this time deeper. A ten minute journey brought them to a solitary location with miles of sand stretching to infinity. It was uneven land with gradient sometimes rising to form crests like a rising tides and sometimes falling to form troughs like an ebbing tide. Unlike the Stiphel fields, there were no stands for the crowd and no human soul could be seen except the occupants of the ARV. Walter and Louis loitered around and found nothing but sand everywhere. Gursled's players too were becoming desperate now.

“Look There.” Louis shouted, pointing at eastern sky. Arising from behind the woods from where this sand zone started, was coming a herd of ARVs, hundreds of them, of course carrying all the students of the school. *Spectators of the match*, Walter smiled. The ARVs moved slowly and one could see hundreds of eyes peering down at them from the ARV’s sealed windows. At some distance from them, the ARVs stopped moving and started arranging themselves in a circle around the competitors. It arranged over the circular magnetic belt on the ground, just like the train arranges itself on the line. Just like the railway lines, there was an intricate clutter of magnetic belts all over Galnovio over which the ARVs flew to maintain the constant repelling force which helped them maintain, in turn, a constant distance from the ground. Unlike the competitors expected these ARVs didn’t descend and remained in the air with hundreds of children sitting and cheering in them. Another ARV approached from a distance moving faster than the rest of them and looking better than the rest of the ARVs. Its structure seemed stronger and well maintained and it glimmered under the effect of the setting Lom. It was the teachers ARV. One could clearly see Professor Harles with many other teachers in the ARV. It descended and from it got down, Shaggy Polkig. As soon as he got down, the ARV rose again and arranged itself between the rests of the ARVs.

“Welcome everyone!” Shaggy said, looking up at the ARVs. “We expect a great match here. The invincible Gursled versus The daring Burlino. We must start before light goes out. Shouldn’t we? Let’s go then.” As soon as he completed the statement, the beautiful ARV descended again and carried him up in the sky.

“Take your positions please.” He shouted from the rising ARV. Walter and Louis stood still on one side of the line which separated their opponents from them, the line being the safety distance between the two teams.

“Here in today’s match, we must be ready for bloodshed and pain. There is no rule here. When any player of the team puts his hands and head on the ground entirely, the team is declared to have lost. Understood?” Both teams nodded, glaring at each other. There was a buzz of fear from the girls sitting in the ARVs.

“Three.....Two.....One.....GO!!!” Shaggy shouted.

Walter had started visualizing even before Shaggy had shouted, so a streak of red light erupted from his hand as soon as the countdown was over and Shaggy’s ‘GO’ overlapped with the streak. The jet of the light traveled at an astonishing speed and hit one of their opponents in the stomach. He howled with pain but his partner covered him up. He stretched his two fingers and a brownish smoke enveloped around those two fingers of his. Very suddenly

he jumped and outstretched those two fingers at Walter. A band of brown smoke erupted like the Vesuvius with a loud sound. Walter dodged the band and in the meanwhile Louis hit the injured opponent repeatedly by his Wellizen skills and dodged the others moves. An outburst of cheering for Walter pierced the air but Walter remained immune to the outside chaos. Another jet of blue light erupted from Walter's hand. This jet was faster and even before the Gursled's player could do anything, the jet struck him against his chest and he fell on the ground with a thud. His shoulders and hands rested on the ground but his head was still above the ground. One shot and it would do, Walter thought. Walter and Louis had chosen their victims themselves without any discussion and they concentrated on getting those players rest their shoulders and head on the ground. Walter had chosen the tall, lean fellow named Gyto Kigy and Louis had chosen the fellow who Walter had attacked in the very beginning named Serol Nashel.

Serol was still howling with the terrible streak of red light that had struck him. Moreover, Louis was repeatedly getting him a slap or a kick or a punch and it clearly seemed that Serol was not ready for so intense a battle of Wellizen. On the other hand the battle between Walter and Gyto was extreme and lethal. Flashes of light passed from here to there as fast as light like bullets and nothing less lethal. Walter dodged many attacks and kept attacking his opponent with double the force. All his body was wet with perspiration and he knew that the match must be put to an end as soon as possible. A finishing move perhaps. The biggest advantage that Walter thought there was in Wellizen was that one could play even those tricks which one had never even seen been done but his visualization can make those things happen which are not even discovered. Something of that sort was required. A band of blue smoke perhaps. Yes, that would do. Walter had learnt from the Stiphel guide that among all the colors, blue was the strongest and most harming. Black of course was the strongest color and the master of all as written in the book. Walter didn't want some serious harm so he visualized himself sending a cloud of blue smoke from his fore finger and middle finger. This move was utilizing extraordinary energy, Walter felt. All his muscles felt powerless and for the first time he noticed how badly sweating he was. Louis was still constantly attacking Serol who was still lying on the floor, but with his head up in the air. After some difficult moments, smoke started revolving around Walter's fingers. Soon, the air became dense with the blue smoke. Gyto now was getting up slowly, struggling with his body. Like a conjurer playing tricks and like a soldier raining down bullets on his foes, Walter rose to a fascinating height, once again with his Wellizen and stretched his hand towards Gyto. The blue

smoke exploded from Walter's fingers and struck Gyto in the face. He howled and fell with a bang and his arms and head rested tranquilly by his side, admitting defeat. The night had fallen and the battle ground was faintly illuminated by the jiopy lamps. There the crowd shrieked and cheered wildly, giving the message that the match had been thoroughly enjoyed. The expected winners had lost, and that too crushingly. Everyone felt that Walter and Louis were far better and served victory. They both, on the other hand were in no condition to think or enjoy. They fell on the ground with exhaustion, perspiring. The ARVs which were in the air for so much time, descended down slowly and from it emerged Burlino members who ran to Walter and Louis to enjoy the victory. They carried them in their arms, shouting and cheering. A sleep of satisfaction, contentment and tiredness fell upon Walter and Louis and he fell asleep in his friends' arms itself. Professor Loryet, smiled, seeing Walter asleep and his ARV disappeared in the darkness of the night. He too was satisfied by the abilities of his students now. Until last year, Professor Loryet had never used the tougher methods to educate but here he had used a rigid method, for the safety of his own students and his ruse had worked well. Even better than his imagination.

On the ground floor of the Nespherean administrative building, in the main 'decisions room', as they called it, all the members of Professor Mortati's administrative board sat waiting for Mortati to arrive. Impatience and desperation was in the air and about fifteen members sat on a circular table leaving the central chair for Mortati. Calmly and methodically, Professor Mortati entered the room with some files and all the members of the room stood erect in his respect.

'Good evening. I owe you all my billion apologies to call you all at such an ungodly hour but the urgency and the significance of the matter drove me to do this.' He stopped, looking at everyone.

"I received another communication from Galnovian Plendisecort and Galnovian chancellor and they both proclaim that there is no one called Walter Martin within their precincts. This perhaps is the tenth time they are deceitful because I know that I let that boy off. He was supposed to be back now to my service."

"I am sorry to interrupt you sir but don't you think that all this chaos is made just for a small boy. He may be anywhere sir, I think." said one of the members.

“Crook face, the point is not that. I am not skirmishing because I want that boy’s service. I have many people to serve me. I am gnawing because I fear that Galnovio has been using the tunnel that I used to enter it. I think they have cracked the code and got the keys made. May be that boy was smuggled back to Galnovio. If that is it, I don’t think it is healthy for us. And you say, Crook face that he may be in Nesphereo itself, eh? Do you think I am foolish enough to go running behind others house without searching my own house? Just for your information, crooked face, a thorough search has been conducted, from slums to palaces. And that woman is not giving anything away either. I have tortured her, threatened her and did everything that I could possibly do to get something out of her but she is stoical and intrepid. I will have to kill her someday.” Mortati said casually.

“Sir, what about the man? That lady’s husband.” asked someone.

“The very same. He is in there too. Not giving anything away. By their unresponsiveness, you know what I derive. That the boy is not here. He is somewhere far, unknown to all this. I am afraid this ‘far’ place is Galnovio. Perhaps Plendisecort.” Mortati said, thinking deeply.

“But sir, who would know your password? Who would understand the code language? We don’t know it. How can an outsider know it?”

“This is the question, Big nose, that has been irritating me. Although I know that there are many geeks and geniuses in Galnovio, I don’t think anyone is good enough to break the code. And even if he does, how did that person know what is going on the other side? Amazing.”

“Sir then what do you suggest?” asked someone.

“Awkward teeth, I think that we should invade Galnovio. Yes, everyone, that’s the only course left open for us to take. We know that we are strong enough to crush that Galnovio, then why wait? And wait for what? We haven’t got the credit that we deserved of the Dulen. We would snatch it this time.”

Everyone sat silent for some time, mentally preparing themselves for the ordeal that was coming.

“That’ll do. If no one of you wants to ask any question, we don’t have anything more to discuss about. Chubby cheeks, ask the commander to arrange the army. I will order the day of invasion soon. Have a good night, everyone.” He walked away, leaving everyone in complete distress. Although Mortati had wished them a good night they all knew how troubled their night really would be. They had now learnt that Mortati liked violence. Not liked, rather *loved* violence.

Walter got up late the next morning with a better health. His youthful body had shaken the weariness off it. He felt stronger and yet extremely hungry. He ran to Louis's chamber. Louis was lying lazily on the bed with a smile, probably rewinding the whole match again in his mind.

"I am starving. Have anything to eat?" Walter asked. Louis beckoned towards his cupboard without speaking anything. Walter got fresh fruits in the small drawer below his cupboard and he took them out.

"You know, what I was thinking of, Walter?" Louis's voice came when Walter was about to turn away to go.

"Wh...o...t.?" Walter asked, merely able to speak because of the fruits which he had forced in his mouth out of hunger.

"About that book, Walter. You remember my sister sent me a book, a non-published book. We didn't read it after Pojen evening. I feel a lure from within."

Walter too got the book back in his memory. "I remember. But Louis, do you realize that today we have a match against the abhorred Rublus and I don't want to lose because I was busy with a book which speaks nonsense."

"Not nonsense, Walter. That is why I feel this lure."

"Louis, the whole school has high hopes from our house and this time everybody is hoping that the victors will be Burlino. I neither want to disappoint them nor myself for any reason at all. We will read that book but some other time. Right?"

Louis nodded but not too emphatically.

"Now get up and get ready. The awaited day is here." Walter said and strolled out of the room.

Once again, Walter and Louis found themselves on the Stiphel ring and around them were the stands. This time there were many brown posters too and the crowd seemed to be a mixture of red and brown. Walter had decided that this time he would not let the control of the ring pass to his opponents and had made a strong ruse with Louis who was entirely fit now. Although Walter didn't tell anyone, all the time in the Wellizen duel against Gursled, Walter had covered Louis to protect him and get the harm himself, if any was unavoidable.

"Ready?" Shaggy shouted, enthusiastically.

Both the teams nodded. The countdown started and with a final "GO", the ring started rotating. From the very beginning, Walter remained careful not

to let the control pass. At that time, he was controlling the ring with Louis pushing it from the corner to increase the speed. Walter remained ready for the sudden boost in their energies which was the trick that Gursled players had used to get back in the match. But they didn't do anything of that sort. They kept concentrating on the movement of the ring between their feet. Walter and Louis had increased the speed of the ring considerably to make survival difficult for their opponents. Suddenly balls started bubbling out of the center of the ring towards Walter and Louis. They used their bats to hit in a spirit of ultimate vengeance. *Rublus is Donal's house*, this thought gave Walter the strength of anger which one finds infinitely stuffed within, without one's knowledge. He hit the ball harder and Louis gave the ring a greater push.

"Formula number thirty seven, Walter." Louis yelled. This formula was to slip to the edge of the ring and suddenly stop it, one of the best tricks at Stiphel, making the opponent to lose the balance and fall consequently.

"Right." Walter yelled back. He continuously hit the ball with his bat and his opponents were hit by some of the shots and some of them were successfully dodged. Walter and Louis hideously slipped to the edge and just when Louis was about to give the ring a sudden halt, his legs slipped off the ring and he moved towards the heath and in the way, his hand caught the thick edge of the ring. Walter didn't expect such sudden change of events and his legs too slipped and he hung from the edge of the ring just when he was slipping his way to the edge to give the ring a tarry. The control of the ring passed from them and they continuously changed their grips to remain on their side of the ring. Balls hit them hard on the head and hands and their grips started weakening. *No! not to Rublus, we cannot lose to Rublus*, Walter thought. He tried very hard to regain his grip on the ring but the ring was moving very fast and the balls were continuously hitting them. They hardly got time from changing their grips continuously as they needed to do to remain on their side of the ring. There, the crowd was on their edge of the seats. All the Rublus supporters had even got up to celebrate the victory which they were sure was coming, with their team.

Flying the Nespherean jet fighter F-789, golden, bullets-showering, fighter aero plane, Flight Martial Robert Hillman opened the microphone. He punched some buttons on the vast control panel. "Martial Robert speaking. F-789. Two back ups required immediately. Over and out."

"Back ups not available. Over and out." said a voice from the speaker.

"Damn." Martial Robert said to himself.

“Martial, fly due thirty four degree west at a curve of twenty nine degree. The call is being transferred to Professor Mortati. Wants to talk to you immediately. Over and out.” came the voice again from the speaker.

“Can you hear me Martial?” came a deep, high pitched voice. Robert suddenly sat erect as if Mortati could see him.

“Yes, sir.” he said.

“Listen carefully then. I want that whole crowd in that match to be killed. Then only your mission will be accomplished. I have sent fifteen fighter crafts behind you. They must be approaching. Watch out for that jets of light which I know will be targeted at you once you get in contact. Dodge them. There is no other solution to them. Good luck. Over and out.” the voice seized to emanate. Robert breathed normally once again.

“Anyone about?” he said in the microphone.

“Speak.” came the similar voice of Mortati.

“Sir, there are so many children out there too. I mean am Ier....Do I have _”

“Yes. Martial. You have to kill them too. It’s the part of the plan. Let mission Galnovio, phase 1, Maruar destruction be accomplished. Over and out.”

Robert clicked a button on his panel. The radar button. The screen in front of him brightened to life. He could see fifteen tiny dots some kilometers behind him. They all were his cover ups. He clicked another button. Two bullet launchers in front of the craft popped out. He pressed the ‘load’ button and the circular launcher lurched, burdened by bullets.

“Martial Robert. F-790 to F-805 fighter crafts approaching. Please slow down to two hundred kilometers per hour.” came a voice from the speaker. Very soon, a group of sixteen bullet-showering crafts sped towards the Maruar, Galnovio.

Walter struggled on the ring, the terrible speed and the continuous shower of balls added to his discomforts. Louis too was struggling, repeatedly changing the grip. Walter was now sure that another five minutes and his hands would give away and he would fall in the heath with Louis who too seemed utterly exhausted. The slippery ring refused to carry them too long, it seemed. Suddenly between the showers of balls, something piercing hit Walter. An extreme surge of pain overpowered him on his left shoulder and he lost the grip on the ring and fell, searing with pain. In his way down towards the heath, Walter saw many strange objects looking like finnilis, showering something lethal on the crowd. He fell on the similar soft surface and now the pain increased fourfold. He looked at his arm. It was smeared

all over with blood, pale red, draining energy from his body. The sight made him howl even louder. How much could one expect from him? After all he was a ten year old kid. He had shown enough maturity and bravery till now but now his body appeared to give away. Louis too came down in the heath, howling with pain too. Walter rose with great effort to look at his friend. Louis was bleeding terribly from his leg. Walter still didn't know what had hit him. It was a senseless thought for him. At that moment he just knew that the pain was killing him.

"MORENCE!!" he shouted, praying sincerely for the first time. Walter now felt something stronger gripping him. Sleep. Was it the sleep of death? He wondered. Weakness had overpowered him and there was nothing he could possibly do, down in the heath.

Up on the Stiphel field, the crafts still showered bullets, rushing here and there with amazing velocity. Almost all the students had been successfully saved by Professor Loryet who was sending lethal bands of black light, hitting the crafts and making them undergo terrible damage. Wherever the black light struck the crafts, the part of that craft burnt off as if hit by some invisible super force. Martial Robert continuously meandered his craft to prevent the jets of light from striking his crafts. The bands of light were the main concern for Robert as the macil guns that the Galnovian soldiers carried were not making any effect on his plane. He switched on the radar and saw that only four of his back ups were remaining. All the rest of them had crashed. He accelerated his plane with rage lowering it to almost ground level.

"What the hell are you doing Martial?" came a voice from the speaker but Robert never hesitated. The craft dashed across the field towards the place from where the Galnovian Professors were attacking on them. He targeted the craft towards the healthiest and the most important opponent that he could see, Professor Loryet. Professor Loryet observed the craft too late when the craft was too close to be repelled.

"AAARRGGGHHH!!!" cried a voice. A figure rose to a height of fifty meters before falling on the ground with a thud being hit by the terrible velocity of the craft which hit him right on the stomach.

"Back ups. We go back. Come on rush for your life. Back to Nesphereo base Allatone airport." said Robert on his microphone once he had passed through the base. All the aircrafts disappeared rising once again with a lightening-like velocity. All the professors rushed towards the place where

the figure hit by the craft had fallen. They approached closer. In the bright light of Lom, it was distinct that the figure was not of Professor Loryet but of Professor Loric Hanison and Professor Harles was in the group of the professors who were approaching Loric Hanison's figure. Actually, Professor Hanison was standing just beside Professor Loryet when the craft had been lowered and he had seen the craft approaching before Professor Loryet. He had thrown Professor Loryet aside and had got him in front of the craft which hit him right in the stomach. He had fallen from a height of fifty meters. One of the professors bent to check his pulse. His face turned grim. "My Marence! Sir! He is no more. Professor Hanison is dead, sir." Tears rained down his cheeks on seeing Professor Hanison lying dead on the floor. "Oh my Marence! It can't be true. It isn't the truth." Professor Loryet mumbled, his eyes trying hard not to shed tears.

"I was the one who was targeted. I was the one who should have died. Why did you sacrifice yourself? You don't deserve this, Oh mighty soul!" Professor Loryet broke down. He clutched Professor Hanison's hands, his dead, lifeless hands.

Evening fell and yet Professor Loryet and all the others sat beside the cadaver of Loric Hanison. He was too great a person to deserve this. He was the best scientist in Galnovio and yet there was nothing called pride in him. Besides being a frozain professor, very few people around Loric Hanison knew that he had many great inventions to his name too. On the other hand, the last thought that had come to Loric Hanison before death was not of fear, pain or sadness. He had said to himself, "Walter, its time to get out of the good world. The bad one is welcoming you. Be a subjugator and pierce this part of your life successfully. Good luck."

Some hundred kilometers away, four fighter aero planes, half destroyed and half successful, landed on the Allatone airport, Nesphereo.

IX

Walter arose suddenly. He had been sleeping. From how much time, he could not tell. Where was he? Was he alive? Walter sat erect in his bed. He felt for the bed. It was surely not his.

"Easy, young man. Take it easy. You are in the infirmary. How are you feeling?" came a familiar voice.

“Fine.” Walter said when he saw that the voice was of the same man who had guided him outside the heath to Burlino’s tunnel back door in their match against Gursled.

“Where is Louis?” Walter asked, lowering in his bed.

“Sleeping beside you. His wound wasn’t as big as yours. It is just that he would limp for a few days.”

“And what about me?”

“You? Well you will have to rest for a week or so. Till that time you cannot move your left arm. It has been bandaged.” the man replied. The room was completely dark and Walter could only silhouette of the old man. Walter felt for his left hand. It had been tightly bandaged by white cloth. Walter knew that a special leaf called fazuop was found in Galnovio which quickly healed wounds.

“Have you used fazuop?” Walter asked.

“Of course.”

“And yet you say the wound would take one week to heal.”

“Yes, young man. No living thing can do a godly miracle. It would take some time. Sleep now. I really praise youngsters’ slumber. I shout, I laugh, I sing and yet you sleep soundly. A sign of healthy body. Rest, young man. Wish I had such a youthful body like you.” he said, his voice fading and his silhouette shortening.

“I still don’t know what hit me that hard. I saw some finnilike creatures firing something.”

“You were hit by a bullet, young man. Don’t ask me who did it and what is bullet. I am too tired of answering questions.”

Two days later, Walter felt healthier and he sat erect in the morning. He looked at Louis who was still sleeping.

“Up again, young man. How are you now?” the old man came again.

“Very good. Can I get up?” Walter asked.

“I am afraid not. But I have got a message for you from Professor Loryet.” the old man said. *Message from Professor Loryet? What does he want from me?* Walter wondered.

“He came last evening but you were sleeping. So he left you a message. I tell you, he was praising you a lot. You seem to have impressed him. Eh?” the old man smiled. “Well, whatever. He wanted to see you in his room anytime you feel healthy. But you must go as soon as possible.”

“Can I go now?”

“Yes, you may, if you are feeling all right. There are no classes for nine days to come, so, yes, you may go.”

“Why aren’t there any classes?” Walter asked, now that he was feeling healthier.

“Don’t you know?” the old man asked from a distance.

“Know what?”

“Professor Loric Hanison, you know?”

“What happened to Professor Loric Hanison?” Walter asked fearing the worst.

“He is no more. He passed away, trying to protect Professor Loryet. Great man!” the old man said slowly. Walter remembered the face of Loric Hanison and a chill arose within him. The person is no more in Sistrovius. Once an approachable man, now he is gone so far that no one can ever see him again, Walter thought. Though he didn’t really know Professor Hanison as he was the senior frozain professor but even then he felt a sense of sympathy for the man who radiated knowledge and wisdom from his face. And the thought that he had saved Professor Loryet and sacrificed himself made him a great character in Walter’s mind.

Walter got up from his bed with difficulty and searched for the exit to the room. It was very difficult to see anything in the darkness that the old man had maintained in the room.

“Show me the way out please.” Walter said after a few futile attempts.

“Sure.” the old man came running from the other corner of the room and led him out. As soon as he got of the room, he felt that his arm was still painful. He felt heaviness in his own frame which till now had seemed to him athletic. The corridor in front of him was not familiar so he turned back and asked the old man to help him get to the office. They both descended a floor and then turned left. They both stopped dead in front of a small counter where a woman was sitting with a register.

Walter walked coyly and said, “I am Walter Smit. Professor Loryet called me. Can I go in?”

The lady walked away without speaking a word and after a short while came back. “Will you wait for some time? He is busy right now.”

“For how much time?” asked the old man when Walter was about to sit.

“Fifteen minutes.”

The old man too settled along with Walter and after fifty minutes of wait, a bell rang.

“You may go in.” the lady said nonchalantly. Walter walked nervously to the room. He knocked. A faint voice said ‘Come in’. He opened the door. An aroma penetrated his nostrils and a very beautiful room welcomed

Walter. In one corner of the room was Professor Loryet's imperial chair, his head was bent down, reading something. He looked up and asked Walter to take a seat.

"So, Walter how are you feeling? Is the shoulder still giving you trouble?" Professor Harles asked, still reading.

"I am fine sir." Walter said shortly.

"Walter, are you acquainted with the fact that Professor Hanison martyred?" Professor Loryet came straight to the topic.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, in his will that we found in his residence, he left you this box." Professor Loryet took out a large wooden box, golden and carved. *Professor Loryet left me something? I didn't even know him. How did he know me? What did he want to send to me?* Questions like this came striking in Walter's mind. He nervously took the box from Professor's hand and held it. The box was heavy.

"You may go. That is all that I wanted to give you." Professor said, looking back at his book. Walter got up to leave. Just when he was about to exit from the room, the voice of Professor Loryet came. "Just for your information, this box is a magnetically locked box. It will open by the correct partner magnet of the lock magnet."

"Thank you, sir. Can I ask you something, professor?" Walter said, with some confidence.

"You may ask the question but it depends whether I will answer." he said, without looking up.

"Who attacked us, sir? And what were those objects which flew and hit something hard on us."

"Walter, we were attacked by Nesphereo. I am sorry but I cannot answer your second question." professor said.

Walter thanked him and vanished from the room.

Back in his chamber, Walter concentrated on the box that Professor Loric Hanison had left for him. Why and how, Walter could not tell. Professor Loryet had said that the box would open only by the partner magnet of the lock magnet. What could be the partner magnet? Walter wondered. He tried some force on the box but it was too strong even to be budged. The only magnet that he had with him was his identity card magnet. Could that be the partner magnet? Walter ran to his cupboard and got his magnetic card out. He put the magnet in front of the lock and most surprisingly the lock twisted and then stuck to Walter's identity card, opening the box. Walter was now bent over a sudden attack of excitement and in this attack, he couldn't notice the pain. He was asked to come back to the infirmary within five minutes

after keeping that box, the old man had said. He hurriedly opened the box. The sight filled him with desperation. Inside this big wooden box was a smaller box with two wires emerging out of it. The two wires had something circular, perforated and bigger than the rest of the wire on one end of them. On the other end, the wire disappeared inside the box. He tried the identity card again but this time the smaller box inside the bigger one didn't budge. Five minutes must have passed, Walter thought. He put the smaller box back in and kept in the safest place that he had in his chamber. Then he hobbled his way to the infirmary. Though his arm was once again throbbing, he didn't feel it. His mind was bent over the box, its strange security system and Loric Hanison's desire for Walter to get that box. In a trice, everything had changed. The contents of that box mystified Walter and the feeling that something was going on from a good while and he hadn't known it, gripped him.

Martial Robert Hillman stood waiting in Professor Mortati's room; his whole body trembled as he knew that an ordeal was expected. They had failed in their mission. Only one person was killed and some injured, a complete failure when one heard that the aim was an all killing-massacre.

"Explain yourself." came a cold voice so suddenly that Robert jerked shrilly. "Sir, those jets of light were too very powerful and it seemed that Galnovians expected an attack. They were quite ready. Moreover the management was great. All the students disappeared as soon as the first roar of the bullet was heard. Something like an underground tunnel was made perhaps."

"I understand, Martial. They are not exactly fools, you see. You got to expect something from them. Moreover, I know who knew we were attacking. Loric of course. I think he was the one who was killed." Robert nodded. "Good. He is the most wanted from over eight years now. He was one of the geniuses that Galnovio have. Other one is of course Harles. Another great man. Okay Robert, I don't think that you were at fault in this. I know that they were great and it's a good habit to praise your enemies too. This makes you realize you own follies. But not too much. At the moment, I plan to delay the war proceedings. The damage has been enough. Moreover, they are ready at the moment. Let things return to normalcy and then we would attack again. You may go, young man." Robert gratefully walked away. Professor Mortati heaved. He felt anger but he realized that this time he was wrong and not Galnovio. A massacre was surely not what he wanted.

Why should he kill thousands of innocents to take revenge of the behavior that had been done to him? He just wanted Galnovio to hand over that boy to him. They must not take benefit of his mercy. He planned that he would give ultimatum to Galnovio that either they should hand over the boy or the prisoner would be killed.

After another four days of rest, Walter felt a lot stronger and his arm troubled him less. Louis too had got up when Walter arose lazily from his bed. He felt for his left arm. The bandage was removed he could just feel a serum covered skin where the bullet had hit him.

“You had just hibernated or what?” Walter asked when he saw Louis awake for the first time in so many days.

“I woke up when you were sleeping. I was about to ask the same question to you.” Louis smiled. Walter smiled back. In the darkness of the room, Walter could only see the faint silhouette of Louis.

“How are you man?” Walter asked.

“Top hole. Just that gory leg giving me trouble. I will have to hobble for days. What about you?”

“I am good. Who do you think won that match?” Walter asked.

“That was the very first question that I put up to Gerald, that old man, you know?” Walter nodded. “He said that the Global Cup was abandoned. The match was declared to be a draw.”

“Lucky for us. We would have lost it.” Walter said.

“I don’t think so.”

“You don’t?”

“No. I was just thinking of yelling some trick at you. I was thinking of the trick of using the magnet, the only chance I knew it was for us. The magnet could have got us on the ring. It’s just that it didn’t strike us.”

There was a silence for some time, silence of exhaustion, laziness and sadness.

“You heard about Professor Loric—”

“Yes, I did. Disastrous.” Louis interrupted.

“When will I be off to my chamber back again?”

“Today perhaps. Gerald has gone off to get the permission.” Louis lazily said.

At that very instant, the door of the infirmary opened to reveal that it was afternoon and the half slanting rays of Lom came obliquely in the room. Gerald came in with some leaf made papers.

“You will be discharged, both of you, in the evening. Sign this. It proves that you are fit now and you were very well cared.” he walked towards them with those leaves and a pen. Actually the pen was a wood made thin cylindrical object. The ink actually was the juice of crushed form of a specially discovered plant’s leaf.

Walter and Louis signed the leaf and the old man performed the final check up. They both were found to be perfectly healthy now. Walter once again felt an intimate excitement gripping him. The excitement of getting that box opened. He was not going to tell anything to anyone. Not even Louis.

Alone in his chamber, Walter hurriedly opened his safe and took out the box. The small box inside the bigger one has something like wires, Walter noticed. What was he supposed to do to open the box? What was the use of those wires which had something odd on one end? Was he supposed to snap the wire? He tried some force on the wire but it was very strong and very well made. For Walter, it was just like a thick thread and nothing less. He didn’t know that this was the wire which would change everything.

A timid knock on the front door awoke Walter from his reverie. He quickly hid the box below his quilt and ran to open the door. It was Louis with a lousy expression.

“What’s up Walter?”

“Nothing.” Walter said reluctantly. The last thing that he wanted to do just now was to talk to anyone.

“Can I sleep in your room? I am feeling quite lonely out there in my room.”

“No.”

“Why not?”

“I am busy.”

“You just said that you were doing nothing.”

Walter remained silent.

“Tell me what were you doing?”

“Nothing.”

“Then can I sleep on your bed.”

“No. DON’T YOU UNDERSTAND??” Walter yelled.

“Oh! Easy, man. Why are you overreacting?”

“GET LOST! PLEASE!!” Walter pushed Louis towards the entrance.

Louis kept staring blankly at him for some time and then went away. Walter felt sad for his own behavior but didn’t Louis understand? He was up to

something serious. Walter argued within himself and reached the conclusion that he was right and Louis was at fault.

He retrieved the box and once again concentrated on cracking it. He knew that it was just some trick that he needed to see through and the box would open. He held the two wires in his hands. Something was needed to be done with those two wires itself, Walter felt. But what? He had seen the instrument that Gerald had used to check their heart beats called Frostaret (stethoscope) was it something like that? Was he supposed to put those objects attached to the wire in his ears? He tried. As soon as he put the earphones in his ears, the frequency of the inaudible vibrations was recorded. The wire transmitted the frequency to the twenty kilobytes card slot inside the box. The frequency of the prerecorded vibration matched with the frequency of the inaudible vibration of Walter and the box clicked open. Walter bubbled with excitement. No more concealment. He saw three shining golden keys and a large booklet arranged neatly inside the box. Walter took out the booklet first. It was handwritten in a familiar handwriting. But Walter could not recall where he had seen it. Slanting and small, very much familiar, Walter noted. Walter read the first salutation sentence. *Dear Walter M.* This time it struck him. It was no one else but that J.Jackson. He too had addressed Walter by that Walter M. and the handwriting was perfectly identical. *What the hell is going on?* Walter gasped.

Dear Walter M.

I don't know how to begin. There is so much I want to tell you. I know that if I straight away put up the thing that this letter will carry, you won't believe me. So, I will make some confessions. First of all, I am J.Jackson. Why, I will tell you later on.

Walter smiled to himself. He had guessed correctly. Loric Hanison was J.Jackson, why, he was about to tell him. Walter gulped with anticipation.

Listen very carefully, Walter for this letter holds astonishing significance.

Walter adjusted in his bed and spread his legs comfortably, the letter gripped tightly in his arms. The booklet was written in a very good handwriting

which unfolded the mists of years. Walter turned the pages very quickly, entirely lost in the letter. His eyes remained riveted to the slanting, small handwriting and his eyes reddened. After reading for over half an hour, Walter turned over the last page. Nothing could be derived from his face. His eyes were red and his body was trembling. Mechanically, as if under a spell, he walked to Louis's chamber. As soon as Louis saw Walter, he remembered how Walter had behaved with him just some time ago.

"So now you remember me, eh? The way you yelled at me! As if I am some ruffian or something. Why do you come now? Go. Go and do whatever you were doing and never tell me. You are the most ungrateful wretch I have ever met. I agree to help you at studies; I agree to be your partner in the Global Cup and what do I get as a reward. A scorn. Go away; I am no more your friend." Louis yelled. It was distinct that all this time Louis had been thinking rather a lot about Walter's strange behavior. Walter turned slowly away, his eyes were still red. Tears rolled down his face. He was alone in this cruel world, he thought. There, Louis clearly found something amiss in Walter's manner. It forced him to think with a cool head. He quietly approached Walter.

"Wait. What's wrong man? Come on, tell me. I won't let you off." Louis hastily said. Walter stopped still robotically and handed over the booklet that he had just read to Louis. Louis looked closely at Walter and then started reading the letter. All the time, Walter kept on staring blankly at the front wall. His mind was blank and the harsh reality was choking him. Louis took quite a good time in reading the letter. When he too had read it, his face too went blank with horror. His body trembled in the same way as of Walter's and darkness fell in front of him.

"Morence! My dear Morence! Why didn't you ever tell me about this letter?" Louis asked holding himself together.

"You never let me." Walter said in a barely audible voice, convulsed by a sob.

There was a silence. Walter was still awkwardly staring at the wall and Louis was staring at Walter to observe his expressions. Louis wanted to say sorry for the way he had spoken to Walter just minutes ago but a voice within him told that it was not the time.

"Walter, the letter states that Galnovio is no more, safe for us." Louis said, trying hard to keep his voice calm.

"Nesphereo isn't safe either." Walter said.

"Walter, but you got to get into Nesphereo to save Mrs. Seph Smit."

Walter closed his eyes, swimming in the past. His eyes visualized his mother playing with him, running behind him and getting him dressed. But now, he could not even call her 'mother'. She was just Mrs. Seph Smit.

"Walter, take it from me, just in case you have a doubt, that man is not lying. It's the truth. We got to get out of here," Louis said. "And that too very soon."

"Walter, don't lose patience. Please have faith. I understand how difficult it really must be but you got to do something, not for yourself, but for your lifeline, for the person because of whom you are here." Louis continued.

Walter got up and dabbed his wailing eyes. He then paced up and down Louis's chamber, his face down, in a deep thought. Walter had realized that Louis was right. No purpose would be saved by sitting and crying. Action was required, immediate and powerful. Now was the time to save Seph Smit from the hands of the tyrannical Mortati. His brows gathered to a frown and he stopped uncertainly, staring at Louis.

"What's—"

"We will be setting out tonight, Louis. It's got to be fast. Any moment that man might kill her. Moreover, I have to get out from this place too. It's not safe for me."

"*Us*, Walter. It's not safe for *us*. Professor Loric Hanison clearly commands you to take me along with yourself. In fact, it will not make any difference for me, Walter. I was your friend and everybody knows that. If you go away, leaving me behind, they would stone me to death. I love adventures, Walter and Hanison sir has clearly stated that this journey is going to be nothing less than that. I would love to do something in which so big power such as these are involved. Can you believe it? We are in the possession of the most powerful secret that ever existed." Louis said, smiling.

"Louis, I our first aim is to save my- I don't know what I should call her. Mrs. Seph Smit, right?" Walter said, once again, mournfully.

"Right. Then all these things lie secondarily. Just to prevent ourselves from such repeated lack of words, we would call Mrs. Seph Smit and Mr. Smit Arseferos from now onwards. You know, Arseferos was the legendary hero who had survived hundred years of imprisonment and had come out alive from the prisons of Justel, the villain."

"Let us pack our bags then. We will get out of the school at about ten and reach Professor Hanison's house at about twelve." Walter decided.

"Walter, Hanison sir has written that you have the keys to demon's tunnel. Is it indeed?" Louis asked fulfilling his curiosity.

"Yes, I have it. He also said that I have password of the electronic lock. But I don't know what it is."

“He must have hidden it somewhere. We will find it. And we will take that book along with ourselves too. He has said that it will prove useful.”
“Right.” Walter said and disappeared in his chamber to pack his luggage.

Captive in her cell, Seph Smit felt a sharp pain in her wrist. She could do nothing. Her hands were tightly bound behind her back. Minutes ago, she was brought in the torture chamber where Mortati was going to take her interview for the umpteenth time. Once again she had decided that she would not let a word out in relation to the whereabouts of Walter or anything else. Heavy footsteps and then clicking open of the lights gave the message that Mortati had come. The door closed with a thud and all the lights except the spotlights closed. Mortati took a chair opposite to the bound figure and glared at the woman.

“Today lady, it’s the situation of do or die for you. Either you tell me the whole story or your son dies.”

“I am telling nothing. You will never get my son. Kill me but you can do nothing to my son.” Seph Smit yelled.

“Is it? Well, you do not know that just seven days back we attacked Plendisecort and some students were killed. We can do many things if we want to. It’s our goodness that we don’t, lady.” Seph Smit was dumbstruck.
Students died, my Marence!

“Kidding, lady,” Mortati smiled wickedly. “We attacked, no doubt, but no student was killed. Just a professor who deserved death, died. I don’t believe in killing innocents but the criminals must perish. And let me tell you, lady, at the moment you are acting as a criminal and I have the mood of killing you unless you tell about that boy.”

“Which professor was killed?” Seph Smit asked, fearing the worst.

“Lady, I know about that Loric Hanison. A clever fellow, he was. He used my things against myself, fiend. He was the one who died.”

The lady jerked shrilly. It clearly meant that now her son was alone with no one to support him. This murderer, he had killed Loric! The biggest genius that Galnovio ever possessed.

“Why are you doing all this? It’s just because of a boy. What is that you want from the boy? You wanted to make him a soldier, didn’t you? You can get so many soldiers in Nesphereo. Why only him? Why my boy?” Seph Smit said, fuming with rage.

“Lady, it’s not the point of a small boy. Even if it had been a nonliving thing, I would have behaved in the same manner. The point is that Galnovio

is taking wrong benefit of our lenience. We will force it to return a registered citizen of Nesphereo. Moreover, perhaps you don't see but there are far greater thing than just a quest for the boy. Far bigger powers are involved in this battle." Professor Mortati. The pity that he was feeling for the woman till now was replaced by anger.

"Lady, enough of gossip. Tell me, did you tell the boy the truth or you made him live in the dark?"

"I am telling you nothing."

"Look woman now, I have all the mood of whipping you. I don't want to use violence on a woman."

"I am not telling you anything."

WHACK!! WHACK!!! Mortati hit Seph Smit by the thin long cane that he was carrying along with himself.

"AAARRRRGGGGH!!" the whips tore her skin but she didn't speak a word.

"Only tell me, did he call you mother? Did you tell him the truth?" Mortati yelled. Mortati had guessed the whole story now but it was hypothetical. He needed to consolidate his guess.

"What would a woman with no children do?" Seph Smit said, with her voice wavering.

'Got it.' Mortati said to himself. He smiled wickedly.

"Tell me, where is he now?"

"I don't know. Even if I would know, I wouldn't tell you that. Believe me, wicked man, you are late. The job has been done. You can do nothing now." Seph Smit said.

Tired of such behavior, Mortati stalked out of the room, saying that he would very soon kill her. Seph Smit smiled feebly, her body aching. 'I don't mind. As long as you know nothing.' she said to herself. She now knew that if Loric Hanison had died, then he must have given the keys to Dulen to Walter. That meant that Walter was the master of weapons of ultimate destruction and power. He was in the possession of the biggest secret wealth that ever existed on Sistrovius. She smiled contently. She couldn't see the other aspect. Seph Smit had adoration for Walter which could never extinguish. Although, she didn't deserve it, he had always called her 'mother' and this happy memory made her smile.

Professor Mortati happily came out of the torture chamber, dancing to his own rhythm and in his own thoughts. He had been successful in this questioning round. Mortati had outlined the way a person generally would

behave if he is lying or hiding something. It was distinct that the woman had never told the boy the truth. Yes, he had done it. The way the woman had spoken, it was distinct. So, Walter was only known as Walter Smit. He decided to address Walter by Walter Smit in the next letter which he would write right now to Professor Harles.

At about nine in the night, Walter and Louis were completely packed to set out. The night was cool and windy and they had to carry their cloaks and scarves to set out in such conditions.

“How will we get out?” Louis said, wearing his gloves in the leisure room which was now entirely empty. Walter and Louis had avoided all their friends by staying in their chambers most of the time. Their friends had come many a times to the infirmary to meet them but they had been asleep every time. They all were very sad by this sudden change of events and the cancellation of the Global Cup which they so much had looked forward to winning. Nothing else was in their knowledge.

“We will have to hurt some people, Louis. The guards defend the boundaries of Plendisecort. Once we are out of the school, we will have to rush through mountains.” Walter said.

“But that way is not worth climbing and walking, I am afraid. It’s an infinite stretch of uneven land which may lead us nowhere. That is why ARVs are used to go over these areas.”

“But we can follow the tracks of the magnetic ARV line. It must be going to the base.”

“Yes, Walter. But only one of them does. I mean there are so many lines running from this route. How will we know which way to go?”

“My Marence! Suddenly so much has happened that I find myself paralyzed. Suggest me something. I don’t know anything.” Walter said, as if utterly exhausted.

Louis kept staring moodily into space before venturing on to a reply.

“Do you know where is that room where we went to learn to make things practically?” Louis asked, hopefully.

“Creativity room? Yes, I do, but why?”

“See, I think we can make our own ARV. All the material will be available in that room. Magnet, wood, et cetera. So, we will escape from Plendisecort on our ARV.” Louis said, bubbling with excitement. Although, Walter was talking well now but his lips hadn’t broadened to give a smile from quite a good time.

“But the magnet has got to be the partner magnet of the one that is used on the tracks.”

“The tracks, Walter, are not made of one sort of magnet. It is a mixture of all sorts of magnets that can be found on Galnovio. Didn’t you know this? Even our flight base which we use to climb floors of our building is made of that material.”

“Well then. Let us rush.”

Walter and Louis kept their luggage there itself and came out of the tunnel in the cool nighttime air. They hideously passed through the everywhere-leading alley and then turned right. In front of them was a huge mountain, another Plendisecort building. It was the center of all indoor games, laboratories, and art and craft rooms. The whole school was shadowed by a ghostly silence as if the school was mourning for the death of a genius. They walked through a narrow road which was bordered on both sides by thick green and huge trees, looking down upon them. The entrance of this monstrous building was a miniature door at the very foot of the mountain. It was locked. Walter and Louis looked at each other and then nodded. Both of them backed away from the door and then glared at it as if it was a criminal guilty of some theft. They stretched their fingers towards the door which was now vibrating shrilly. At the very same instant, Walter and Louis jumped and a jet of red light erupted from their hands. The jet hit the door and it fell back, revealing darkness. It was entirely broken off its hinges but Walter and Louis hardly cared now that it was their last night in the school. They took out the jiopy that they were carrying with them and stretched it outwards searching for the magnetic plate used for climbing to the second floor. Very soon, the jiopy was enlightening the magnetic plate in the extreme left of the building, a floor above. Walter stood on the launch pad and put his magnet out. A crushing force pulled him upwards and he turned his magnet in the opposite direction at the very correct instant to stand comfortably on the first floor. Louis comfortably came after Walter and they both wandered across the first floor to search the Creativity Room. In the center of the floor was the plank saying the same and they both broke another wooden lock to finally enter the room.

“Alright, first of all, we need six wooden planks and then magnets. Nails are a must of course.” Louis said searching for all this material. Walter and Louis sat on the floor, hammering nails in the planks and attaching them together to make a cubical carriage. The carriage was nothing bigger than the sitting space of the latest nano car without any tires, of course. Louis made the magnet flooring of the carriage which would be free to move and would be moved in opposite direction when the ARV is to be flied. He fitted

the front and rear magnetic rods by giving magnetic slates, shape. Walter observed that Louis was very good at all this and was far more efficient than him. Within two hours, their carriage attained the ARV look. All the time, Louis had not allowed Walter to do anything and had asked him to sit and work out a plan once they were out of the school. When the ARV was ready Louis finally got up, grinning. Walter didn't smile but walked towards their newly made ARV which was covered by a black cloth just to create some excitement.

"We welcome the master of Dulen, Walter, to unveil the ARV." Louis announced to invisible crowd, facing the walls of the room just as he had seen in the inaugural ceremony of Ciriuz, the best ARV ever made. At this, Walter gave a half smile.

"I never knew I could so well in all this. You know, our ARV is even better than the Ciriuz. It's foldable. I mean, you just pull one string and the small but thick plank of wood would stretch to become our ARV. And of course we can use it on ground." Louis smirked.

"Okay, so now sir, if you please step forward to unveil our Ruell Vem. We will be honored." Louis said.

Walter walked up to the covered black cloth and picked it up. Louis started clapping softly, smiling.

"Does it really crumble to a single plank if we pull that string?" Walter asked, amazed.

"Yes, it does," Louis beamed. "I have put several joints in all the walls of these planks from which they bend and become a single thick bundle of planks. The chief purpose of me doing is that I wanted it to be easy to handle. Good, isn't it?"

"Great, Louis. I am glad to have such a good person beside me when I am on such a trip." Walter said. Louis smiled and blushed.

"Well, whatever, we got to get out of here now. Our ARV is getting rather impatient to carry us."

Walter and Louis carried the makeshift ARV and got out of the building. There were no Plendisecort guards or watchmen within the campus owing to the chilling cold during the night due to which everyone preferred to remain within the buildings. But security was provided in the Plendisecort boundaries from which the ARV track started. Walter and Louis traced the alley till its very end where it ended in front of a huge wall. The wall surrounded the entire campus and was notorious for its barbed wires stung on top of it.

Walter and Louis stood in front of the wall staring blankly.

"Can you climb it?" Louis asked, doubting it.

“I think I can.” Walter said and gave it a try. The wall was not very high but the wires were quite precarious. Walter reached to the edge of it with a push and jumped across without even touching the wire.

“Come on, you come too. It’s easy.” Walter said from behind the wall.

Louis came behind Walter without hurting himself either. The ARV track started from a few paces off but to reach the track they had to pass through armed guards standing in front of the wall. In the faint glimmer of the jioopy, they could clearly see them, standing with their eyes fixed robotically in front of them.

“Some violence will be necessary, I am afraid.” Walter said. Walter and Louis fixed their eyes towards their victim and within a trifle of a second, a jet of red light erupted from Walter’s outstretched hand and a second later, from Louis’s hand. It hit the two soldiers who were blocking their path and they fell down. Walter and Louis moved a few paces to their left to see if any more soldiers were there but nothing could be seen except the two bodies lying unconsciously on the floor.

“Time to bid goodbye.” Louis said, looking back at the faintly visible campus of Plendisecort. From this distance the campus looked magnificent with some pale yellow lights spitting light in some round high windows of a few studious students and the same pale yellow light glimmering in the uppermost floor of the main building mountain, Professor Harles residence which was said to glimmer perpetually. They both walked away from the glimmer into darkness. The harsh reality! This very building would become their murder location within a day if they would not leave. From this distance, it looked like an ocean of purity, peace and happiness. Concealment is an eternal law of nature.

Walter and Louis brought their ARV to full size and brought it to the track. Its magnets were strong and the ride would be enjoyable, Louis anticipated. They both sat in the ARV with Louis on the driver seat of their carriage. The ARV was then placed on the stand from where it was to take off. The stand was also made by Louis. The stand was attached to the carriage’s base so that it may fly along with the carriage and could be removed when in air. Walter turned the magnetic floor of the ARV in the opposite direction of its attraction with the ARV track and with a strong repelling force, the ARV rose. The ARV’s carriage was a small compartment with two open windows from which the cold gulls rushed inwards making the compartment very cold. Louis, the driver, sat in a different compartment separated from the passenger one by a small door which had all the controls with a chair on which Louis sat imperially.

“Can we go faster, Louis? We are running late.” Walter said from the passenger seat. Louis put the front rod closer to the magnetic base and their ARV gained speed by the increased attraction of the front magnets.

“And can you do something about this cold air? It’s freezing me.”

“Come and sit with me.” Louis said. Walter came to the front driver part of the ARV and sat on its floor and took out his quilt. He spread it to Louis’s legs too and then curled himself up on the floor, trembling with cold. Louis looked at Walter and felt an expression that he had never felt for him. Pity. The curled figure, his whole life had changed entirely within minutes. His dreams, his commitments had all crashed to ruins. In front of Louis was the open part, for viewing the front. Louis had placed two jiopys in two sockets which he specially had made for giving them light. He could barely see anything in front of him. The night was very dark and cold. Louis knew that if they were going right, they would soon come across a four way of tracks from which they would have to go straight. Louis looked down as their ARV cruised through high mountains and the tracks roughly made through uneven land. Whenever the track rose because of some elevation of the relief, their ARV too rose automatically to maintain that constant distance from the ground. Within minutes, they reached the four-way from which they headed straight. The cold air hit Louis’s face and he trembled. Walter was still on the floor of the ARV, slumbering. They made their way through the staff residences and then came the board once again—“Plendisecort-National School of Galnovio.” Louis heaved on seeing this board. It meant that they were going right. Just a two minute journey and they would reach the Plendisecort base from which all the ARVs to Plendisecort took of.

“Come on, Walter. Get up. We are nearly there.” Louis said, cheerfully.

Walter jerked and got up. He peered out of the small window to see the beautiful lake just before the base and then the picturesque Plendisecort base. They must have passed the ice carved statue in darkness, Walter thought. He sat upright, folded his blanket and kept it in his suitcase. The bright lights of the base appeared. The bright jiopy lights. All the best quality jiopys were used by this place only and the rest went to homes and everywhere.

“Take out that map that your father gifted you.” Walter said.

“I am driving. You get it from my bag. It’s in the front pocket.” Louis said. Walter entered the passenger seats and got the map out. He unfolded it and stared.

“We will be on Giopyt Street when we get out of the base. From there, we will rush to the right and trace that road. Another left turn and we will be on the Marane Street. From there, we have to go to house number 56.”

“We are landing. Turning the plate towards the attraction side.” Louis said, pulling one of the levers.

“How does it work?” Walter asked.

“When I pull this lever, the two wooden sticks which are attached to the magnetic plate, move in opposite direction taking the magnetic plate along with them. The magnetic plate moves slowly so that we have a soft landing. Will you please put on the stand?”

Walter opened the gate and attached the stand from the hooks that were specially made for it.

“The wind is sub-zero.” Walter said pulling his scarf over himself. The ARV made a safe landing and folded itself to a collection of planks and the magnetic plate lied lowermost in these planks. Some guards stood blocking the exit from the base. Once again, jets of red light erupted and the guards fell down. Walter knew he could not know the time until the Lom had risen and that wasn’t happening for a good time yet. Once out of the base, they unfolded their ARV and this time it slipped over the ice carved road like a Ruell Vem with Walter as driver.

Professor Harles sat in his study after taking a bath, studying deeply. His thoughts were greatly troubled. Very occasionally, the glimmering face of Professor Loric Hanison appeared in his thoughts and he moved his head rapidly left and right as if shooing away the thoughts. Once again, he found his mind thinking repeatedly about Loric Hanison and his great achievements. He opened another book titled- ‘Dark Wellizen- the Advanced Art of the Gyjitons.’ Another book and then another book, having almost the same title. He absorbed himself in his work but a knock shook him off. *Who could it be?* He wondered. He walked gallantly towards the front door and opened the door. A horrified face of a Galnovian soldier appeared.

“Tausimar, I apologize for making this entry at such an ungodly hour.” the soldier said.

“Not at all, Gyras. What makes your face such as that?” Professor Harles said.

“Tausimar, we saw two silhouettes escaping the campus on an ARV. They injured two soldiers before doing so.” the soldier said.

“What? When?” Professor Harles asked, horrified.

“Some three hours ago, Tausimar. They knew Wellizen, sir. The ARV was not a registered one. But, it was fast and our macil guns aren’t that efficient.”

“Why didn’t you use Wellizen then?”

“We are not allowed to use Wellizen without Authority’s permission, Tausimar and Authority is not in contact.” The soldier said robotically.

“Were they adults, Gyras?”

“I am afraid not, Tausimar. Their height was nothing over four and a half feet. The soldiers on that boundary said.”

“Then immediately conduct a search and see who is missing by using that magnetic card acceptor. Report me immediately. I wonder what you were doing for these three hours.”

“We were on the far eastern boundary, sir. We just came to conduct the final check before the change of duties and the soldiers on that boundary told us. They were injured, Tausimar. We had to cure them too.”

“I understand. Please report immediately once you know. Right?”

“Right, Tausimar.” The soldier said and disappeared in the darkness of the staircase and Professor Harles closed the door with the weight of another problem.

Walter and Louis reached 56, Marane Street at about midnight and as soon as they did, a deep slumber fell upon them. The journey had been quite a long one for them. Before slumbering, they had locked the house from inside which was open when they had come, in every way they could possibly do and had put all the big objects of the house in front of the half battered gate. Though they had planned they would immediately start working to find the tunnel, the comfortable interiors of the house had overpowered their intentions of work. Walter’s sleep wasn’t proving to be very comfortable. After every fifteen minutes, he got up to see the front door locked and solid and every little whizzing of winds sounded him like soldiers storming into the house. So, finally he got up and loitered about the house, trying to discover anything. There were big jioy lamps everywhere in the house and thousands of papers were scattered all across the floor in some of the rooms. The house, though looked very old and creepy from outside, it was big, spacious, comfortable and unique from within. Walter opened many drawers to see something special but everywhere he found a collection of trash, unchecked notebooks and outdated newspapers. Walter entered Loric Hanison’s study and found a very beautiful watch ticking on its own (a wonder for Walter) showing of four o’clock in the morning. But no sight of wonder was moving Walter. He was far too much absorbed in his own thoughts. He opened a drawer and found a sealed envelope in the crowd of many the same letters. On top of it was written—

To,
Professor Loric Hanison.
56, Marane Street,
Galnovio.

Walter broke the seal and took out the letter. It was written in some other script which Walter could not understand at all and he put it back from where he had taken it. He felt dizzy after reading such a preposterous script. All the documents in this room were in the same script which meant that this room was meaningless. He backed away from the room and entered the sore but its filth drove him apart. He went back to the room in which Louis was sleeping and tried a nap, wondering about the same slanting handwriting which was coming to his mind now and then.

I am going to tell you a story now. Story holds significance, I repeat Walter.

The knock on the door received an immediate response as Professor Loryet was anxiously waiting for this knock. The same guard stood in front of the door with robotic expressions.

“Tausimar, the two students are first years. Louis Tipton and Walter Smit.” the soldier said.

On hearing this, Professor Loryet’s face went blank with horror. He remembered the boy well, very well. He had come to his office and had even asked something to him. He was the one who had run before injuring two soldiers seriously! His brows clouded and he became rigid with fury.

“Have they taken their magnetic cards along with them?” he asked, doubting it.

“Yes, sir.”

“So, locate them using the government positioning systems. I want it immediate—”

“I am sorry to interrupt you sir but we have already located them. They are in 56, Marane Street. Professor Loric Hanison’s residence.” These government positioning systems were nothing very special machines or anything. That thing just had the collection of the magnetic identity cards of all Galnovian residents and the attraction power that this thing felt from the head office determined the distance at which the card of the missing person was present.

“We chased the magnetic card’s attraction all the way to the residence and the soldiers are still standing there, surrounding the house from all sides. We didn’t take action without directions.” the soldier continued.

They were in Loric Hanison's residence? The demon's tunnel started right from there. Loric Hanison had used that house for research. Then did both of them mean to break into Nesphereo? Or worse, were they Nespherean citizens who had come to Galnovio as a spy? Professor Loryet feared his own thoughts.

"Right then. Don't take any actions before day break. Inform the Chancellor immediately to send a small force. We'll need it."

"Right Tausimar." The soldier said and disappeared.

Those two folks were quite cunning, Professor Harles thought. They had come right under his nose, lived within it for quite a good time and suddenly had disappeared. But he decided he wouldn't let them reach till the end of the tunnel into Nesphereo and would catch them right here in Galnovio. He quickly dressed himself up and prepared him for some bloodshed which was sure to happen today.

Even before the day had broken, Walter and Louis were up. Louis had even taken bath in the plush bathroom of the house but Walter had utilized the time by wandering across the house. Walter even partly opened the window of the study if anyone was around but everything was dark and his mind contented when he saw peace and quite everywhere. When both of them had taken bath, only one thing remained for them to be satisfied—Hunger. Walter had shouted at least ten times till now at Louis to get him something to eat. Louis entered the kitchen, the only place which hadn't been investigated by Walter. Louis turned the whole of the kitchen upside down but could find nothing to eat at all. It seemed that Professor Loric Hanison didn't eat at all there. There were no huge boxes for keeping things, no stove, no chimney and no basin. They both even doubted whether it was kitchen or not because it resemble one. As none other room was kitchen, they had thought that his one would be it but it was not. It was perhaps a store or something. They both settled down in the drawing room, feeling starved. But yet they had to work, with food or without food.

"Louis, I wandered across whole of this house but I could not find anything such as a tunnel entrance. Come on, let's search it somewhere."

"Walter, will we get something to eat nearby?" Louis asked.

"Well, yes. I saw a small shop when we were getting here. I can go and get something." Walter said.

"There is something called money that we need, Walter and we hardly have it."

“Well, yes. I have nothing, to be frank. My mother never even told me the currency. But we can get it out of Loric Hanison.” Walter smiled.

“What do you mean?” Louis got up.

“I mean I know where he kept his money. I even found some. Perhaps he left it for us.” They both rushed to the study and Walter opened one of drawers and took out a wallet. Louis hurriedly opened it and gasped with wonder.

“I must say he was quite a rich man. It’s about one thousand felas, enough to last for one year.”

“Of course we are not staying here for even a day more. Our exit from Galnovio is today, Louis.”

“I quite well know that, Walter but before entering into such serious talks, can we have something to eat?”

“What should I get?” Walter asked, tucking ten felas in his pocket.

“Get anything. Cherries, apples, grapes, anything. Please don’t get papaya. I don’t like that.” Louis said fancying himself eating. “And listen. Fifty toles make one fela. Ten senels makes one tole. So, use some mathematics when the shopkeeper would return you money.”

Walter took some time in learning the currency and when he had done so, he set out.

“Would there be any danger of getting caught?” Walter had asked before setting out.

“I don’t think so. And even if there is peril, you can always get over them by using your Wellizen.” Louis had said indifferently.

Walter looked left and right to ensure that he was not being watched and then walked to his left. There were some morning walkers to be seen here and there through the cluster of houses. After every few paces Walter turned back to ensure that he was not being followed and then again started walking contently. He reached the shop within five minutes but a closed shutter welcomed him. Walter went closer to the closed shop and stood in front of it, staring blankly. He waited for the shop to open regretting his stupidity to expect a shopkeeper to open his shop this early. Suddenly, as if it was all expected, the shutter skidded upwards to reveal about twenty soldiers pointing their guns right at Walter’s heart. Walter stood flabbergasted.

“Hands up” said one of the soldiers. Walter did obediently.

“Kneel down. Hands at your back.”

Walter did as he said. One of the soldiers approached Walter with handcuffs. He tied Walter’s hands behind his back and waited as if someone was expected. Walter turned his neck down despairingly. Everything was over. He had been slow and lazy in his actions. *You must immediately act*, Loric Hanison had said.

You have the responsibility of completing the story, Walter.

The words hit him like a bullet. He had to do something. But what? Wellizen wasn't possible. His hands were tied. Moreover, for performing Wellizen, one needed peace of mind but at that moment, his mind was tormenting with thoughts. He could not do anything else. He was held at gunpoint, kneeled down.

"Back off everyone." Suddenly came a voice, a cold voice. Walter had his back to the voice and he tilted his neck backwards but as soon as he did so, the guns came closer to him, almost touching his neck.

"Reveal yourself Tausimar." the soldier with maximum stars pinned to his chest said. His gun too was touching Walter's neck.

"I am commanded by Chancellor of Galnovio to hold both of the criminals captive. I have one of them. Louis Tipton. I want you to hand me over the other one. Walter Smit." the voice said. Walter's skin prickled. *Louis is captive too?* Walter once again turned back but the gun knocked him off. A soldier was staring back at him. With his hands still tied, Walter got up with difficulty and kneeled down, as ordered by the soldier.

"Tausimar, we have orders from Professor Loryet to hold this criminal captive until he turns up. The other one too has been located and will be caught only in the presence of Professor Loryet." the highest ranked soldier said.

"For your kindest information, Tausimar, the Chancellor of Galnovio is a much higher post then the post of Professor Loryet. I will be pleased if you kindly hurry." the man said, impatiently.

Walter was now getting less and less interested in this conversation. He knew he would die this way or that way. All of them were cruel, heartless people.

"Please reveal your identity, Tausimar." the senior soldier said.

"I am Dezro Solido, personal assistant of the Chancellor." the man said, showing of an identity card with shining 'G' written in center in blue letters.

"Where are you supposed to hold them captive?" the senior soldier asked.

"In the same house in which they were living. The other boy is with me." He brought Louis to light. He too was sitting on the floor, squatting on his haunches, with his hands tied behind his back.

"Do you want us to provide you cover up?"

"Sure. If you feel its required." the man said. The soldier ordered Walter to stand straight. Still held at gunpoint, he was ordered to walk towards the man. When Walter approached the man, he could see how crooked he looked. His expression was rigid but his eyes were shining as if glimmer in darkness. He took out one long rope from his pocket and tied it from

Walter's as well as Louis's handcuffs. Then, just like rich people who take their pet dogs for a walk in the morning, he started walking with Walter and Louis being dragged to stagger by the rope of which he had one end in his hand. Walter looked at Louis, who was struggling hard to keep up. His eyes were despairing and there was no hope in it.

Within five minutes they were in front of the Loric Hanison's residence.

"You surround the house from all sides from the outside. Just in case. And inform me when Professor Loryet turns up." the man said and banged door with Walter and Louis inside. He took the rope and tied it to a hook which left nothing for Walter and Louis to do. They were now ordered to kneel down on the floor in the opposite direction to which the man was standing. The man took off his cloak and disappeared in the house. Walter and Louis looked around but he was nowhere to be seen. They had just seen him going towards the study of Loric Hanison and then nowhere. For over fifteen minutes, he didn't turn up. Many times, Walter and Louis felt him rushing from one room to other. Now Walter and Louis had started feeling pain in their knees because of the kneeling and they thought of getting up but suddenly the man turned up, grinning at them.

"I am sorry to have kept you kneeling all this time," Suddenly Walter and Louis's handcuffs shattered and the rope broke. The man grinned again. "I have found the demon's tunnel entrance. It's up in the store room. My son must turn up now." The man said, pacing up and down the room, impatiently. Walter and Louis were still kneeling on the floor, utterly confused. *Who on Sistrovius is he talking about?* Walter wondered.

"Please sit comfortably folks. Why are you still kneeling down? Oh! You have not recognized me, have you?" Walter and Louis stared blankly at him. "As I said, I am Dezro Solido, Nory Solido's father. Now I think you can recognize me." the man closely looked at them. Walter and Louis gasped. He was Nory Solido's father. But whose side is he on? Walter wondered.

Professor Loryet had already dressed himself up and was enchanting some holy words in the name of Morence. Whatever the situation might be, even if it be a grace emergency, he never missed this prayer. It was his firm belief that his day could be good only if Morence's name is taken in its start. He kneeled down, bowed low and then got up with a jerk and just when he was going in his study, he heard a diffident knock on the door. He hurried to the door. A messenger was standing sullenly in front of it.

"I apologize, Tausimar—"

"Speak business. I do not have time." Professor Loryet said, overwhelmingly.

“Tausimar, I have a letter for you from Nespherean Professor Mortati.” the messenger took out a scrap from his inner pocket. “He requests a reply immediately.”

Professor Harles snatched the letter from the messenger and started reading hurriedly.

Professor Loryet,

This is to inform you that my cross examination with my prisoner has been completed and I have been told that the boy was called Walter Smit and not Walter Martin as I said earlier. I am sorry to have caused you this much trouble and now I ask you to please hand over the boy as soon as possible. Please send your reply immediately.

Professor Mortati

Professor Loryet reread the letter and his eyes went wide with revulsion. Walter Smit, the same boy who had created havoc tonight in Galnovio. Then why was Mortati asking for the boy? Is he a Nespherean citizen or worse is he a Nespherean spy who has crossed his time line of stay? For the second time, such stray thoughts tormented in his mind. He soothed his insides and sent the reply explaining the complete situation in Galnovio at that time and wrote that he hoped that Mortati would keep patience until the culprit was caught. Fearing that person, Professor Harles diffidently handed over the letter to the messenger who bowed low and disappeared. He looked at his watch. He was late, terribly late. The seen required him and he had prohibited anyone to take action until he had come.

“I am actually commanded by late Professor Hanison to get you in the tunnel and my boy has been given the opportunity only by him, to do something for his nation, even though the nation doesn’t know it.” The man smirked. “I am on your side, in simpler words. My boy must turn up now.” the man again looked at the kitchen door.

“But how would you escape once we are gone? You are surrounded by soldiers.” Walter asked.

“Don’t you worry about that. I will go from the way my son comes.”

“But won’t you lose your job once everyone knows that you were the one who helped us out?” Louis said.

“Nope. You know why? Because I am no government servant. I am a scientist and that is how I know Loric Hanison. That identity card was not fake, though. I overpowered the personal assistant of the Chancellor and got it. Walter you must succeed in piercing the Dulen. Here is the map that Loric Hanison made as a replica of the original one. He wanted me to hand it over

to you. I don't know why he chose you. I don't know how he chose you. I just had to do my duty. And this is it. Here is my son. He will go along with you." Suddenly the kitchen door burst open and Nory Solido came in, panting terribly.

"Hello, folks. Sorry father I am late. I must say traffic has increased fourfold nowadays." he said, looking and sounding much smarter than he did in the school.

"It indeed has. I am afraid I am ought to disappear now. Good Luck folks." Dezro said and disappeared behind the kitchen door.

Once he had gone, Nory Solido looked closely at Walter and Louis and beckoned them to follow him.

"Listen Nory. Professor Loric asked me to trust no one other then Louis. I don't think you should come along with us." Walter said, following him with a scowl.

"Shut up. Professor Loryet is here. We can gossip later on." They rushed to the store room and Nory went till the very edge of the room.

"Get your luggage and everything as soon as possible. Come on, quick!" Nory said, getting his bag too. "And Walter get the keys of this tunnel quickly." All three of them quickly got their luggage and put it beside the tunnel entrance in the store room. Nory removed the carpet which sealed the entrance and asked Walter to put the three keys. Walter put them in the three slots which he could clearly see on the surface. There the gate of the house burst open and about twenty soldiers along with Professor Loryet entered the house.

"SEARCH EVERY ROOM!!! QUICK!" Professor Loryet yelled and all the soldiers spread in the house like fire. Professor Loryet knew that the tunnel began from this very place but from which room in this big house, Professor Loryet didn't know. The three keys were successfully accepted but then the electronic screen glimmered asking for the password. No one had the faintest idea of what the password was, not even Nory. He asked Walter to look in the box but the box was clearly empty except the booklet and the three keys. All three of them sat in the room, despairing. Any moment the soldiers could come storming in this room and get them once more. Nory suddenly got up and said, "Got to do something."

One of the soldiers was holding the magnetic card recognizer which attracted the identity card stronger once the card holder was nearer. He reached near to the store room and felt a terrible force pulling the attractor.

“Professor, they are here. They are here!!” he shouted. Five soldiers stormed into the room with the macil guns. They spread in the room targeting every obstacle that posed in front of them. The soldier with the recognizer walked in the extreme end of the room and moved towards the door which led to the terrace. He could feel the attraction stronger there. Clutching his gun tightly in his arms, he opened the door. Nothing could be seen in front him. The terrace was an abandoned place and many weeds had grown up to over six feet height. The recognizer felt a stronger attraction towards the left of the terrace. Making his way through the thick weeds, he traced the attraction. He reached till the very end of the left extent of the terrace but there was no sign of anyone. He peered down from the terrace. The left wall was common with the neighboring house and it was a child’s play to jump to the terrace of the next house, a feet below. The recognizer still felt an attraction on that direction. He stopped there uncertainly and then went back to get some cover ups when he felt that he was being secluded from the rest of his mates. He came back to the same common left wall with all the soldiers and jumped to the neighboring terrace. It was neat and barren. The main construction materials were wood and stones in Galnovio and very often soil was covered over the terrace due to which the growth of weeds was quite common. The attraction, this time, was felt towards the front of this house. They quickly approached the front part and looked down. Nothing. Their enemy was moving very fast.

Down in the store room, Professor Loryet stood alone, making his own search. In the very end of the tunnel he found what he was looking for. The demon’s tunnel entrance. Three golden keys were fixed in three keyholes and the electronic screen was glimmering.

Please enter the seventeen alphabet code.

The keypad had strange symbols which even he hadn’t seen before. It was some sort of script. Professor Harles bent down on the floor and closely stared at the strange symbols. He found it preposterous and he got up but before getting up, he took out the three keys after locking the tunnel and pocketed them. The tunnel was sealed now. They could not go in and it was understood that they were not inside. He got up and loitered about the store room. It was a bedraggled room, he felt. He was about to turn to get out of the room when a jet of red light hit him in his stomach and he fell down, howling with pain.

Walter, Louis and Nory got out of their hide, behind the big box. Nory and Walter rushed to the tunnel entrance and Louis took out the three keys from Professor Loryet's pocket that he had just taken.

"Hitting Professor Loryet, my own teacher was difficult." Walter said, smiling.

"Well, now we have time. All the soldiers are chasing an unreachable target and Professor Loryet wouldn't be conscious for a good while yet. We must work on the password now." Nory said.

"It was lucky for us to find a finnili on the terrace." Louis said.

"I always knew it was a mistake to carry your magnetic identity cards along with yourselves. They could have reached you very easily. Now see, they are chasing a finnili with two identity cards tied to its legs. And all the soldiers must be thinking how very fast our opponents are. Ha! Fancy their expressions when they would find the finnili with the cards tied to it. What a sell!" Nory said. Walter was surprised by Nory's smartness and buffoon-like style which he had never shown in the school. It was distinct that he was a very different fellow at school. Walter had seen him many a times at school, working out questions, solving puzzles of historic significance and opening up secrets had been his hobby but today he sounded utterly different.

"Nory, still you haven't explained why and how you escaped Plendisecort?" Walter asked Nory who was screwing up with the password.

"No time, Walter. Let's first of all get into the tunnel. Louis, can you read the password in English for me?" Nory said, ignoring Walter.

"It's 'GALNOVIANWRECKAGE'." All the time, the soldiers had been searching on the terrace; they had gone to Loric Hanison's study and had conducted a detailed search. But everything had seemed futile. Then they again concentrated on the box that Loric Hanison had given Walter and there they had got the password, engraved on the lower surface of the inner box. They had all bubbled with joy.

"I got it, boys." Walter said. "Now see, in every key pad that I have seen, the first character is the extreme left topmost and then the characters increase towards the right and the first leftmost letter in the next row is next to the extreme right one in the row above. Right?" Walter beamed. After some thinking both Nory and Louis chorused, "Right."

"Then, see there are twenty six symbols on this keypad. The first one must be corresponding to 'A' of English dictionary as well as syllables of Sistros which has the same alphabets and so on."

"You know what. You are right." Nory smiled. Within minutes they had converted the code to that script. They quickly typed it on the keypad and inserted the three keys in the slot. As soon as all these things were perfect,

the tunnel entrance started sliding. It slid away to reveal a narrow passage a feet below. A small staircase was put to descend into the tunnel. They all entered the tunnel and removed the keys from the inside and kept it back in the box. They had taken their entire luggage along with them too when they had hid into the study by jumping from the terrace on the balcony of the study. Once the tunnel had closed perfectly leaving them inside, they heaved a sigh of relief and sat there at the very beginning of the tunnel. The tunnel was made up of solid concrete but it was an unknown material for the Galnovians. Exhaustion was overpowering them. Everything had happened so suddenly that they hadn't got time even to think.

"So, you were asking me why did I come, right?" Nory said. Walter nodded.

"See, Walter, I am here to guide you and to get you till Nesphereo. This was ordered to me by—er.... well I think I will have to tell you."

"Tell me what?" Walter sat straight.

"Listen very carefully. Now once the Martins-the great scientists, were gone, all the Dulen lovers came together. They were sad on losing the map of Dulen. It was a very big loss to Galnovio. So, they worked on the creation of the replica of that map. Professor Loric Hanison was the head of the group that made it. Now, all the members of this society knew that this map needed most powerful security. So, this map was placed under the best security that ever existed in Galnovio. But then, suddenly one day, Loric Hanison asked for the possession of the map. Although the members of this society were not in the favor of giving the map to any individual person, they could not say no to the creator of that map. They kept an eye on Loric Hanison's moves. Loric Hanison handed over the map to his friend, a scientist, my father who immediately reported to the society to the whereabouts of the map. My father also has the same ambition for the map and he wanted it to remain in the custody of the society. So, he too joined the society. The society took the decision that it would protect the map from all odds. I joined the society too. My father was asked to hand over the map to you by Loric Hanison. We didn't do anything against his wishes but our society decided to send someone along with you to ensure that the map would be safe and would be brought back safely under the society's security. I don't know what you are up to. I don't know what you are going to do with this map. But you take it for granted that wherever you are going, I will follow you and these are my orders. I may be of extra help too." Nory said.

"But why is this map so important? No one can pierce that Dulen. Citizens are not even allowed. Moreover, it is too very well protected. So, if anyone even gets this map, there is no danger of ever getting into the Dulen. Then why all this?" Walter asked.

“Before I answer your question, you will have to answer my question, right?” Nory said. Walter nodded. “What do you think is the Dulen?”

“Well, Dulen is a place where all the documents related to the latest weapons which were used in the Great War are kept. The procedure of making many more things is also preserved and protected.” Walter said but his last words were drowned in Nory’s laughter.

“Another commoner, are you Walter? Well, you believe in a common misconception. Walter, just use some common sense. Do you think these written documents which you say are preserved in Dulen, are of any use? Do you think that even if a man gets them, he can be the master of the latest weapons? Of course, not. Galnovio does not possess all the raw materials which are required, Nesphereo possesses them. You must remember that Gyjitons, as we call the Dulen makers, were from the Galnovian side, right?”

“Right.” Walter and Louis chorused.

“That surely means that they wouldn’t go frenzy about creating documents about the creation of things for which the raw material is not even available in their homeland. It’s obvious that they wouldn’t make it for their enemies either. So, it leaves only one conclusion and option left for us, right?”

Walter and Louis nodded.

Nory drew himself to his maximum height of knowledge and said, “And this conclusion is, my dear superstitious people, that Dulen is not what you think it is. It is something far bigger, far mightier and far more important.” Nory said.

“And what is this far bigger, far mightier and far more important?” Louis asked with guile.

“The book that you are carrying along with yourself has the answer. The unpublished book of Loric Hanison.” Nory said. Walter and Louis stared at each other and then Walter hurriedly took out the book from his bag.

“Open the last page.” Nory said, nonchalantly.

I have explained everything that can possibly be known about the Dulen except one thing that had even gnawed me in my working days on Dulen. That is, what exactly is Dulen? A very important question which deserves to be discussed now. I am afraid it is not what all the people think it is. It is surely not just a collection of documents explaining the procedure of making the things for which the raw material is not even available on Galnovio. This is the common misconception that the Gyjitons

purposely put in front of us to let Dulen live in peace. This topic needs explanation and I must explain. Actually, Dulen is a city. The city of the people who survived the Great War. The city of advanced people. The Gyjitors had wandered across the destroyed horizon after the Great War and had found this place, the Dulen. The city of palaces, of beauty. These Gyjitors secretly wandered around the Dulen and found that it is a secret city with wealth that Galnovio and Nesphereo could never ever possess. So, they started tracing the location of this city. But what do you expect? They had advanced gadgets with which they traced all the Gyjitors and killed them. So, the reality is that Gyjitors are not the creators of Dulen, but the discoverers of Dulen. They came to know of any such place. Gyjitors had written and made enough for one to reach till the Dulen but no further. The place was protected, very well protected. Some of the Gyjitors, no doubt, survived the lethal attack and they were the one who lived in the Wagaras Serat and the museum, about one sixth of the total population of the race of Gyjitors.

And yet, it remains the city of happiness, of prosperity, of mightiness. Its portals are closed for everyone outside it and this must be understood very well that there is nothing called 'piercing the Dulen'. We can try and invade the Dulen by the collective power of both the occupational zones but actually very few people know the truth that Dulen is a city and not some farting chest of riches. The government of both the zones knows this truth but they want to conceal it. They have seen enough bloodshed and can see no more, they say but the truth is that Dulen is an unattainable dream, an invincible kingdom and the stronghold of power and evil might against which we don't have the mettle to stand.

Walter and Louis were still staring at the page. Dulen being a city, a distant dream, they had never imagined.

"I still do not understand one thing. Is Dulen evil or good?" Louis asked.

“See, for us, of course they are bad, evil because they drive us off their kingdom but within them, they must be good. I don’t know. Nobody knows.” Nory said.

“This is great. Fancy I never knew so much. Well, Walter what do you say?” Louis asked, seeing Walter lost.

“I am sorry guys if I am spoiling the mood of gossip but we got to get going. Arseferos is in peril. You may stay here and gossip if you want but I am going.” Walter got up, picked up his bag and disappeared in the darkness. Louis and Nory followed him, regretting their forgetfulness of their foremost aim.

About two kilometers away, the soldiers shooed the finnili away after taking out the magnetic cards disgustingly from its legs.

Leading their way through the tunnel, Walter once again thought about the letter. It had changed everything for him. He had been a safe citizen of Galnovio and suddenly he had become nothing but a nomad.

Once upon a time there was an infant, very endearing and adorable. His parents were scientists, great and illustrious. The identity card that you must have used to open the bigger box was actually discovered by them. Many other things that we use nowadays were actually their discoveries. Now this couple had a friend, a scientist just as renowned as them. With course of time, this friend became their family friend and started loving the infant. Whenever the infant’s parents used to be out, this friend took care of him. Now these scientists, three of them, the infant’s parents and their friend, became ambitious. Walter, I hope you know everything about the Dulen. Taking this as a hypothesis, I would continue with my story. This trio wanted to enter and locate the Dulen. Walter, entry in the Dulen is very difficult and the map is compulsorily required to reach that location. The trio asked the government to hand over the map of the Dulen for research. But the government refused claiming it to be private property. The trio was very disappointed by this. Quite frankly, this trio had the ability to enter the Dulen but the government was against them, just for its own selfish needs. They had appointed its own people who were working on this job and they didn’t want the trio to interfere in its working. Because of this, the trio had to take some disastrous steps. They desperately wanted to get in to Dulen and they were ready to do anything to fulfill their ambition. As a consequence of this anxiety, they broke into wagaras museum where the map

was kept and stole it. Now they knew that they must not stop in Galnovio for even a second more. The possession of that map made the parents of that infant a bit selfish. They secluded their friend from the plan of entering in the Dulen. One day, they suddenly left Galnovio with their son and just left a letter behind for their friend. Walter now you must know that there were two competitors in the competition of entering the Dulen, Galnovio and Nesphereo and you must also know that one has to pass through Nesphereo to reach the Dulen. The parents of the infant didn't know this and they were covered by the Nespherean guards and the man was killed. The infant's mother ran and jumped in a heath with the map, leaving the infant behind. The Nespherean guards took the boy to Professor Mortati, the head of Nesphereo. As Mortati was saved in the same way, he pitied the boy and handed him over to a woman in Nesphereo who adopted him. Mortati ordered the woman to hand over the boy to him as soon as he was ten so that he could train him to become a soldier for Nesphereo. Now the friend of the infant's parents was still in Galnovio but he had changed his name and had become a professor at Plendisecort. Of course he had read the letter and in the letter it was written that that they themselves doubted they would ever come back. So, this friend started thinking about the map. He believed that the boy must have been spared by the Nespherean guards because he knew that Nespherean Mortati had a pity for parentless kids and if it was so, the map would surely be with the boy. Now, it had been over six months since they had disappeared from Galnovio and their friend had got the feeling that they had died. He felt love for the small boy. After all it was not his parents had betrayed him. Moreover, he had got to know the boy very well and he felt a temptation to save him from the tyranny of Mortati. He knew that Mortati wouldn't kill the boy but would make him his slave. He wanted to save the boy, he decided. You must not forget that the boy's parents were the most wanted in Galnovio and they were now excessively hated. The friend requested Galnovian authorities to hand over the house that Mortati had used as a base from Galnovio when he had entered Galnovio as a spy, for research. The government agreed knowing the friend to be a great professor who could crack the code of the tunnel and he started living in the house, with a changed name and changed identity. He discovered the entrance of the tunnel which began from that house and tried hard to break the security system which sealed the tunnel which opened straight to Nesphereo. That was exactly what he wanted, he wanted to break in Nesphereo and search for the boy and get him back safely to Galnovio to get the biggest treasure of Galnovio- the map. For some days his efforts seemed futile. When he found no other way, he started digging his own

tunnel which began from almost the same place as the demon's tunnel and reached till Nesphereo. In Nesphereo, it ended inside a ditch. When the work was done after working for over three years, he hurried through the tunnel and reached Nesphereo as a monk. He loitered from house to house searching for the boy showing as if he was begging. He found the boy after a lot of wandering. The boy was a four year old kid now. He had come out to give him something when he had begged in front of his house. Once the friend knew the location of the boy, he entered the house very regularly and after observing everything for a quite few days, he told the step mother of the boy everything. That woman had luckily told nothing to the boy concerning his origin. The boy called the woman his mother and spoke fluent English. The friend too had to learn English as the only language that was spoken in Galnovio was Sistros. The woman was a good one and she understood the necessity of getting the boy to Galnovio but at the same time she didn't want to part with him. This left only one solution- the woman would come to Galnovio too. Her husband, being a government servant could not come along. So a decision was taken that the mother would come to Galnovio but the man would remain in Nesphereo and the mother would come to visit her husband quite regularly by using the tunnel. The friend extended the tunnel to the woman's house in which the boy had been living till now so that she could comfortably come in and out of the tunnel through the two houses on opposite sides. The friend gave the reason that the boy's parents wanted him to get into Plendisecort and he wanted to fulfill their wishes. Of course this was a lie. Nothing like that was written in the letter. The man wanted the boy to be taken to Galnovio so that he could get the map out of him and could hand it over to Galnovian authorities as a national property. Love was also a cause. He had started loving the boy a lot and wanted him to be around. One evening, the woman, the friend and the boy left Nesphereo using the tunnel and reached Galnovio. The friend smuggled security systems from Nesphereo to protect his tunnel and put four locks, three with three golden keys and one electronic lock to ensure that no one could use his tunnel. The most difficult thing now was to get the boy to learn Sistros. The woman learnt it quickly but the boy kept on speaking English. He was taught English and after some years he was admitted in Plendisecort when he became a ten year old. Now the man had understood that the map was not with the boy, that it was lost forever and that the boy's mother had got the map along with herself when she had committed suicide. Now you must remember that Mortati too had asked the woman to hand over the boy when he would be ten years old. He sent the notice timely but no one responded. This made Mortati desperate. He investigated and thought that his demon's

tunnel had been opened, although it was not his tunnel but another tunnel that the friend had made. He became sure that that boy had fled to Galnovio. So, he sent repeated letters to Plendisecort principal but he didn't respond. All this time, once the boy had entered Plendisecort, the woman left for Nesphereo to visit her husband. One day, police surrounded the woman's house and arrested her and her husband according to Mortati's orders. They were imprisoned and still perhaps are in prison, waiting for their death. The boy was not aware of all this. So, he enjoyed his life.

Now Walter I open up something. Please be ready for something, Walter. I am sorry for I or anyone else didn't tell you anything. Let's place the characters in right place now. The friend is me, J.Jackson. My changed name is of course Loric Hanison. The parents are Jansen and Senol Martin. The woman is Seph Smit and her husband is Gerald Smit and the boy; I am sorry Walter, are you. You are Walter Martin and not Walter Smit as you thought till now. And in case you think that this story is apocryphal, ask your friends. Who were the Martins and they would tell you. They would also tell you about the small infant who ran with the Martins which is of course you. Martins and the Jackson were very famous people and later on they became so notorious that they are still remembered as dequisiters- traitors. Walter, in my earlier letters to you, I addressed you by the name of J.Jackson and asked you to keep it secret for your own security's sake. It was necessary for you to think a bit and at the same time it was necessary for me to keep the story in the dark. That is why I addressed you by using my original name and I addressed Louis by using his sister's name. Walter, Louis knows. He knows who is J.Jackson and that is why he was asking you to shut the book every time you were trying to read it. He could not speak it out, as is the custom. He liked his sister for sending him such a good book, which of course is a lie but when he saw the author, he turned pale and avoided the book. Now, Walter I think you understand everything. You must realize the danger, Walter now, that the time has changed. Your further stay in Galnovio is perilous. Walter, any day your step-mother, as we may say, will give away the truth. She is in the most perilous prisons, Walter, in the Nespherean administrative head office, Professor Mortati's personal cells. I want to do a lot of things, Walter but I will be dead by the time you will read this one. Any day Walter, your mother will tell Mortati about your whereabouts and once Mortati addresses you as Walter Smit in his letters, the game is over from Galnovio too. So, you have the responsibility Walter. The responsibility of completing the story. Your step-mother sacrificed herself for you and now you must save her. The only thing that I can give you is the tunnel, Walter. As you know, I still own the house that Mortati

used as a base in Galnovio from which I made my own new tunnel, I give you the possession of the parallel of the demon's tunnel. I must tell you that demon's tunnel is no more in use and is too very well protected to be got into. So, use the tunnel that I made. It stretches to Seph Smit's Galnovian residence, far from the end of the real demon's tunnel. You will have to break into Nesphereo, how; you have will have to work a plan.

The book that I gifted your friend will also be help and if you wonder how I came to know about so many things which were within you and Louis, you must remember that I know Wellizen and I know you must not be knowing that one can read one's brain and memory by using Wellizen. Its all advanced things. Just for your information, the inner box could only be locked by getting the inaudible frequency of the vibrations of your ear. It was quite a challenge for me to get that. I wanted to ensure security, Walter for these documents are topmost secret. Anyone else knows all of it and it will be a disaster. So, during your medical check up, I replaced Frostaret wires with these wires of the box and the frequency of your vibrations was recorded in the memory card which I hid in the vibration sensitive area. This way, as soon as you put the wires in your ear, the frequencies matched and the box opened. You must put the letter back in as soon as you have read it.

So, Walter I would conclude now. Complete the story, Walter, you have the responsibility. I wish you a very good luck in your journey. Don't look back, Walter for there is nothing that you have left behind. All the people whom you think are your well wishers will become killers as soon as they know you are Walter Martin. Be brave. You have the weight of your own race. I will never say that your parents were bad folk, Walter but they became a bit selfish. Quite understandable, when one talks about that evil Dulen. Keep the book within yourself, Walter. Only Louis can be trusted. No one else. Not even Betty, Walter. I am sorry, Walter if this comes as a shock but as your parents would have said, reality cannot be ignored. Once again, I wish you a great luck.

Loric Hanison (Joseph Jackson)

All the words appeared in the form of a picture for Walter, once again. Walter visualized everything in the way it must have happened and felt a chill within him. When he came back to his senses, he felt that they were still walking and Louis and Nory were talking behind him. Walter could not say for how long had he been walking but he could clearly feel some pain in his knees. He turned back to look at his friend. They were still talking,

gossiping. This thought made him rigid and he once again started walking robotically without looking back.

“Do you have any idea how long is this tunnel?” came Nory’s voice from behind his shoulder.

“We must have walked a good part of it. We must be about to reach.” Walter said, though he didn’t have even the slightest of idea. The tunnel was dimly lit, very neat and seldom took turns. They came across a turn, a slight right turn and a feeling started coming that they were there. From the roof of the tunnel came rumbling sounds as if something would drop right into it and some light could be seen a good hundred meters ahead of them. Walter’s mind was still visualizing the end of the story that Loric Hanison had told him but he shook it off. It was time to act, immediately and unconditionally.

“Walter, Nory just told me that if anything is stuck on our lower wrist, our all Wellizen powers cease to exist. This is what is done to all prisoners in Galnovio to prevent them from practicing Wellizen.” Louis said.

“But how?” Walter asked, hearing any such thing for the first time.

“Our wrist is the heart of all the radiation layer nutrition circulation. If anything is put on our wrist tightly, the radiation layer does not get nutrition and consequently it does not emit those radiations.” Nory explained.

“So when the handcuffs were put on my hands, I couldn’t have performed Wellizen?”

“Not if the handcuffs were tight enough.”

Walter had seen Wellizen as the solution to all problems till now but here even that had been violated. A terrible despondency was spreading over Walter and he was finding it difficult to get over it.

“Here is the third letter that Harles has sent me in the day. He sounds desperate. He says that that boy had fled from Galnovio by using *the* tunnel with two other schoolmates of his. He also says that this might be a long drawn out plan of perhaps spying into Galnovio. He thinks that we have sent that boy as a spy to Galnovio. How very ridiculous! Does he think I am stupid enough to first of all send a spy to Galnovio and then go frenzy in search of him? What do you think of this bally latter, balloon belly?” Professor Mortati said, presiding over the seventh meeting of the day.

“Sir, I think that that boy is in Nesphereo now.”

“Of course he is. I am asking you what do you think about the unfounded accusation that Harles has imposed on us?”

“Sir, I think that he is being unreasonable. But sir, why are we going tooth and tongs behind that boy? I can find his reason. He thinks that that boy is a

spy and that boy even used some violence. But I do not understand why we are behind the boy?”

“Balloon belly, we are behind the boy because he is a Nespherean citizen and has committed a legal crime by crossing the border, not once but twice. For the first time, I forgave him for it was no mistake of his but this time, it is his mistake and I am afraid this time there can be no pardon. Chubby cheeks, I think you know the house from which the demon’s tunnel starts from this side.”

“No, sir.”

“Well, it is 45, Allatone Street, near to the airport. Surround the place and if you see any human activity inside, just get the inmates captive.”

“Right sir. But sir I still do not understand one thing. I remember that we filled the tunnel up with soil a year ago and sealed it. So, how did that boy use it again?” asked Chubby cheeks.

“A person before the boy used the tunnel too, Chubby cheeks. Just use some common sense. See, the boy was smuggled to Galnovio. He of course would not go alone. Someone would go along with him and someone from the Galnovian side would help him too. The person from the Nespherean side is of course, Seph Smit and from the Galnovian side is Loric Hanison. We may say that Loric Hanison cracked the tunnel and got it cleared up and everything.” Mortati said.

“I am sorry Professor but I sincerely doubt it. I don’t think anyone except you can crack the tunnel’s entrance. It is just impossible.” Awkward teeth said.

“First of all, don’t be a sycophant and a blind believer, Awkward teeth. Rulers can be wrong too and this time I think I am wrong. You are right. No one can crack the tunnel. It’s all filled up too. I seriously venture to think that we are getting it wrong. We will wait and see. Follow my orders, Chubby cheeks. Good Afternoon all.” Mortati said and disappeared from the room.

A five minute walk led Walter, Louis and Nory to their destination. The tunnel ended with nothingness and they could only see a small entrance above them which opened by the same three keys and the password. Another staircase led them to another store room but of some other house. The house was plush with gadgets that they hadn’t even seen before. They rested in the inner bedroom and Walter put on the air conditioner which he so very well remembered his mother had taught him to switch on. Nesphereo was comparatively hotter and the intensity of Lom was good enough to melt all

the snow that had fallen a month ago. They rested in the snug bed and fell asleep immediately because of the exhaustion of the day's walk. Only Walter could dare to open the curtains partly to see what time was it but Louis found a better object to see time on. It was an electronic clock which showed time- easily and clearly. Walter switched on the television in which they saw some Nespherean girls dancing, because of which they blushed deeply and Walter hurriedly changed the channel. Nory and Louis could not understand English and they had a problem in understanding the Diamond Man, Walter's favorite show when he had been in Nesphereo. But today he found the show soporific because of the nonsense fantasy that it showed. He believed in the reality of Wellizen now. Moreover, the emergency of the situation and the thought of what Arseferos would be doing at that moment when he was enjoying in her air conditioner, made him active.

"We will be setting out in the evening to search that Nespherean Administrative Head Office. I have no idea about this place's roads and everything." Walter said. They had carried their makeshift Ruell Vem along with themselves, folded neatly in Walter's bag.

"How? On foot?" Nory asked.

"No, we have made our folding Ruell Vem, you know." Louis beamed. Louis was spending a lot of time with Nory and Walter did not secretly like it. He wanted to consider everything very seriously but Louis was showing no enthusiasm in their operation since he had met Nory. After this, Louis explained the entire procedure of how they had made it and what all he had done to make it as good as it was and then how he had driven it while Walter had slept on the ARV's floor. Walter left the room disgustedly and wandered across the house. He went in the kitchen and found many things to eat which after giving in a separate bowl to his friends; he ate alone in the drawing room. He could feel Arseferos's touch in the sofas, in the kitchen and even on the bed. He was missing her in everything that he was doing. He dabbed his eyes which he found to be crying and cleared up. He hideously opened the front door of the house and peered out. Nothing. No one was looking at him. There was a small market in front of him and people marched from here to there without taking the slightest notice of him. The Lom was setting now and it was time to leave. He went back to the bedroom where his friends were resting and got them out of bed. They quickly woke up, got ready and got out of the house in stylish clothes that they had found in Mr. Smit's wardrobe. Walter had planned that if would return today, he would only return with his mother. He was also wearing oversized clothes fixed somehow by strapping a tight belt. They got out of the house from the back door which opened into the garage, a long passage where they assembled

their Ruell Vem. They dragged it till the main road where Louis put the front rod down. Their vehicle was earning a lot of curious looks, Walter observed. He was sitting in the passenger compartment with Nory. The Ruell Vem should have skidded when Louis put the front magnetic rod down in front of the flat magnetic base but the Ruell Vem barely moved. It was leading out a horrible yell as if it was made to go against its wishes. Louis got down and looked at the road. It was not made of carved ice as in Galnovio but was made of concrete which did not allow the Ruell Vem to skid comfortably. Louis could not recognize the material and he knelt down to have a closer look. Now, a lot of people were staring curiously at them. Walter quickly took charge of the situation and asked Louis to get up quickly and get the Ruell Vem back inside the garage. Louis was in no mood to do so but when Walter turned his expression rigid, he had to. They dragged their Ruell Vem back to the garage and then Walter explained the cause of the failure of the Ruell Vem to move on the road.

“Oh! Now I understand. I was shocked to see my creation doing bad so soon.” Louis said.

“You know what, Louis. You are acting rather foolishly. Remember our aim.” Walter finally said when he could no more carry his fury.

“What are we to do now?” Nory asked when Louis was about to retort.

“Walter went inside without a word and came back with a key. He then opened the shutter of their garage which Nory and Louis hadn’t even observed. The shutter was pulled up to reveal a beautiful car, red like blood, open and with round headlights. Nory and Louis gasped with wonder on the sight of such a great thing.

“Whatever it is, it is great.” Nory said, still staring at the beauty of the car.

“This is a car. This thing with wheels is used to drive on such roads made up of concrete. It runs like air. I went for drives many a times with Arseferos and I loved it. This can be used but I do not know how to drive it. I have heard that it is tough.” Walter said.

“Whatever, we got to try it. Walter you must know it somewhat.” Nory said. Although Walter didn’t, he nodded and they got into the car. He had seen Arseferos putting the key in the slot. He did the same. He had seen Arseferos giving the key a slight push. He did the same. The engine roared to life. Nory and Louis cheered. Now was the main problem. Walter could see six buttons with one to five digits written on it and on one was written ‘R’. Walter knew that he had to do something with it. He remembered Arseferos clicking one first. He had even asked Arseferos why she had clicked one first. She had replied that in digits, one comes first and then comes two, three, four and five. In the same way, while driving a car too, one comes first

and then the rest. But suddenly, the roar of the car too died away when he was thinking of all this. Walter was still sitting on the driving seat with the handle gripped tightly in his hands. Once again, he gave the key a slight push but the engine merely moaned and died away. After giving many a tries, once again the car roared. Walter quickly punched the button on which one was written. The voice of the engine changed as if it was getting impatient. Now Walter didn't know what he was supposed to do. He had thought that as soon as he would punch one, the car would start moving but nothing of that sort had happened. He remembered that as soon as Arseferos punched the button, the car began to move. What was he supposed to do now? He tried all the button on the deck but nothing happened. Many a times, the car started making strange noises and all the lights started glimmering. Walter bent down in his seat to look if something was below him. He could see something. He sat on the car's mats and looked at that thing. There were two of them. It looked something like a footrest to him. He put his weight upon it to get up and sit back on the seat but most unexpectedly the footrest failed to take his weight and went down. As soon as the footrest went down, the car accelerated suddenly and abruptly and Louis and Nory fell back on their seats. Walter was still on the mat and had fallen back below the seat as soon as the car had accelerated. He put his weight on the second footrest-like thing and the car came to an abrupt halt. Walter had understood it. The right one was the accelerator and the right one was the brake. But Walter couldn't find a reason why such important parts of the car had been placed at such a hideous place. It was so inconvenient to sit below the seat like that, Walter cursed. But Walter had seen Arseferos drive the car many a times. She didn't need to do it. How would he hold the steering? Walter wondered. The car was standing in front of the wide open gate.

"Oiee, listen. Am I supposed to drive like that?" Walter yelled.

"Of course not. Regulate them by your feet." Nory said. Walter smiled at himself, feeling stupid not to realize it before. That was how it seemed as if the car was running on its own. The feet weren't visible of the driving person from outside. Walter sat on the seat, his feet barely reaching the accelerator. He lowered into his seat and then accelerated. Their car turned right, away from the market and cruised through the main tower of the city. It randomly took a left turn and rushed through posh buildings that they had never seen before. Walter was still driving on the first gear and was having a tough time with the steering. The steering sometimes was turned so much that it almost hit the police cars standing on every time and sometimes they didn't even turn when they wanted to because their car barely turned. The traffic too was alarming and Walter had to maintain a good distance from the

cars to prevent them from bothering about their varying speed. Nory and Louis complained loudly to Walter for driving so slowly but even that speed was becoming a menace to Walter. Once again their car cruised randomly to the right of a skyscraper passing over a flyover. The biggest problem was the traffic rules. They had to stop after traveling every twenty meters in front of a red light. Many policemen too had raised their eyebrows on seeing three children in a car, driving preposterously. Many times they were asked to stop to show their license but they simply flew away with Walter pushing the car into fourth gear and when some police car followed them, they hit the car's tires with a Wellizen trick. Walter and Louis came to know that Nory was a great Wellizen champion when he protected their car by enchanting something which made their car bullet proof for some time when a police car was firing at them. Through, all these odds, they cruised but there was no sign of Nespherean Head office Building anywhere. They didn't have the courage of asking someone on the road. So, they kept cruising, here and there without the slightest of success in finding the Head office. The Nespherean residential was a huge place with many modern companies sporting their advertisements on big boards with girls showing off the brand product in bally postures. There were many huge stores and malls, gardens and leisure parks, solid roads and flyovers and many more things which were good enough to move their sight but that day they were bent on something far important and all these beautiful things passed a by unnoticed. Once again, they reached the main tower after completing a round of one side of the city. They were cruising through the other side of the city when the car suddenly slowed down even when Walter was accelerating. The car's roar died away and it rested by the roadside.

"What the hell happened to it?" Walter asked, turning to Nory.

"Unlike our Ruell Vems, these cars run on fuel. The fuel must be over. We don't have any money either. So, indirectly, the game is over." Nory said, getting down from the car.

"What is fuel?" Louis asked.

"Forget it." Nory said. Walter remembered that he very occasionally went to a place with Arseferos in the car where some men inserted a wire in the car and took some money for it. Walter looked about, hopelessly. They were standing in the midst of a huge city with no idea of how to go back home or Nespherean Administrative head office. Walter collared a boy almost of their age who was standing near by.

"Any idea where is Nespherean Head Office?" Walter asked with a smile. The boy looked at him from head to toe and then said, "Yes, go left from this four way and keep following that road and you will be in front of

Nespherean head office at the very end of that road.” the boy replied politely.

“And how much do you think will be the distance?”

“About twenty kilometers.”

“Are you going in that direction too?”

“I am afraid not.” the boy said and entered a city bus which was passing a by. Walter returned back to his friends who were still standing near the car.

“What should we do now?” Walter asked.

“The distance is too much. We cannot reach by foot.” Nory replied.

“If we set out right now, we will reach by nine o clock. Less traffic and less police. What do you say?”

“If there is no other choice.”

Galvin Gyrad, the senior traffic police officer picked up his walkie-talkie and muttered, “Car number NH 43 spotted. The same car that had created chaos on the eastern extent of the city. It is left on the main road. Respond.”

“Okay, Gavril, could you by any chance see who were the occupants of this car?” a voice came from the walkie-talkie.

“Yes, sir. I could see three boys, young boys.”

“Immediately trace the house from which this car came.”

“Already did sir. 89, Market Street. East Nesphereo.”

“Stay on the line.” Mortati took over the line and opened his laptop. He typed 89, Market Street and the name of Seph Smit appeared on the screen. He had stored the house numbers of all the citizens of Nesphereo. So, that Walter had already reached Nesphereo and was living in that house. The house in which his guardian had been living. But how had he done so? How was he left unnoticed, coming out of the house on the Allatone Street. He had got that house surrounded and there was no chance that he could get out of the house. This clearly meant that he was never in that house. He came straight to the house of Seph Smit. But again, how?

“Okay, Gavril, make a sketch of that boy immediately and get it on every news channel and surround that house on Market Street. No one should get in or out of it.”

“Right sir. But there were three of them. And we don’t know which one is the Wanted.”

“Make the sketch of all three of them by using evidences. Get it on news channels immediately. The car was out so it means that the boy is out and then perhaps the fuel got over or he met with a minor accident. So, watch

out. He might be seen on roads. If he is back in already, he must not get out and if he is not in, then he should never get in. Right?”

“Right sir.”

Walter, Louis and Nory Solido set out on foot, marching through the forests of buildings and thousands of cars. They took the left turn as told by the boy and headed straight. This road was far emptier and the buildings were more beautiful and maintained. They strolled tiredly through the road which seemed to stretch endlessly. On both sides of the road were tall buildings and business like people passed to and fro through the road. They walked and the Lom set, peacefully scattering orange light all over the horizon, before disappearing entirely behind mountains. The street lights started glimmering and spit pale yellow light in a small circle around them. There were more of pedestrians on this road and seldom did any car come lower than the earthly Limousine. They walked for over two hours and reached the end of the road when it was pitch dark. They stopped uncertainly in front of the security check in front of which ten heavily armed men covering the entire stretch of the building. The building was luminous because of the numerous street lights and lights that emanated from the windows of this ghostly, heart of Nesphereo. Walter looked at Nory and he smiled. He dragged him and Louis to a dark corner and said, “Now listen. I have learnt the names of the curses and moves. Learn them. It will make your moves stronger. The jet of red light is called Selorto and it can cause unconsciousness, the yellow jet of light is called Falomir and it can cause burns and light damages, the brown one is Gytoryl and it is good enough to put a danger to one’s life, the black one is Herasyl and it is good enough to kill a person and the invisible one is Restrelin. It travels without showing itself. Herasyl means sure death. Now, the blue ball of destruction is called Rewanor, another weapon of widespread destruction and that is all I know. The brown smoke one that you used in your Wellizen match is called Fyselon. That one is great, I tell you.”

“What are we supposed to do with these words?” Louis asked.

“See, when you attack, your moves now should be sharp and your aim, faultless. We would use violence very often now that we have no other weapon. But yes, no civilians. We would not kill civilians. Only criminals. So, when you are attacking, yell ‘Kel elodo’ and whatever you want to chose out of these words. Avoid Herasyl. We must not kill anyone.” Nory said.

Walter and Louis learnt the names quickly and Walter got out of their hide. Louis and Nory stayed their, watching over the seen carefully. It was very

near to the check post from which the government offices started on a narrow alley beside the main road. The Nespherean Administrative Head Office stood proudly in front of them, gigantic and royal. Walter walked over to the check post and one of the armed soldiers came in front and blocked his way.

“Identity card, please.”

“We don’t have any identity cards.” Walter said, bravely.

“Whose son are you? I will ask if your father is free.”

“I am my father’s son.” Walter smiled.

“Stop fiddling or I will arrest you—” A jet of Restrelin light hit the soldier and he fell on the road, howling. All the other soldiers noticed this and held Walter at gunpoint. About a dozen guns were staring back at Walter but Walter was still smiling foolishly.

“Will you shoot me, eh?” Walter said. “Your soldiers are so weak that they fall down only by listening to my voice.”

“Hands up and kneel down.” a soldier commanded. But even before he could do anything another jet of invisible light hit him and he too fell down, howling.

“Look at your champ now. He too has fallen down. Come on, get up.”

Walter simpered.

The soldiers too were by now perplexed. The small boy was really doing nothing and their soldiers were falling down as if his voice was really hurting them. The head of the security personnel asked the soldiers too keep holding the boy on gunpoint and he turned away to call the security captain, sitting inside the office.

“Sir, there is a small boy on the front entrance. He is creating mayhem.” he said in the phone.

“A small boy?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Wait, I will transfer your call to the Head.” the voice came in excitedly.

“Yes, sir.”

The line went dead for some time and then the similar cold voice spoke, “Can you describe that boy’s physical appearance?”

“Well, sir, he is fair, about four and half feet tall, has a fringe resting across his forehead and is foolish.” the head said.

Mortati remained silent for some time, verifying the description of boy’s appearance with the sketch that he had received from the traffic police officer. Most surprisingly, the sketch matched perfectly with the description.

“So, he is on our doorstep. We were going all around for him and here he is.” he said in the walkie-talkie.

“I am sorry but sir, what?”

“Okay, now, Noodle hair, this mission is very important. Listen with your ears wide open and hold your hair above them to initiate the catching up of your pinna. Let that boy come in and if there are some friends with him, let them in too. Get them to one of the rooms respectfully without letting them know, alright. No force, no guns, no handcuffs. Do your work till then and I will do the next bit myself. Right?”

“Right sir.” Noodle hair said and punched the walkie-talkie off. He turned back and ordered his soldiers to lower their guns immediately. Walter was still standing in the midst of the soldier circle, simpering and Louis and Nory were still standing behind the wall looking over the dramatic scene. They were the one who had hit the two soldiers from behind the wall by the invisible Restrelin. The soldiers lowered their guns immediately and now, Louis and Nory too came into play. The head apologized for not recognizing them before, acting perfectly and led them in respectfully. Walter, Louis and Nory were surprised by this behavior and thought that had been mistaken as someone else. Walter cast perplexed looks at Nory and Louis but they were equally muddled. They walked through working places and ascended a floor. This floor was plush with dim yellow lights emanating standard and beauty. They ascended another floor and then entered a small room, air conditioned and pale yellow. They were respectfully asked to sit and wait for someone they called Master. The head backed away, leaving them alone in the room.

“What the hell is going on? I thought we will have to force our way through.” Walter said, getting up from the easy-chair.

“Walter, I am very much afraid but we have fallen into Mortati’s trap. This was his trick. He wants to get you right here. Walter something has to be done.” Louis said, desperately. Walter, too though the same. How very obvious it was, it was all done by Mortati. He had used the policy of containment. He wanted them to be caught in the building itself so that they could not run anywhere other than the building itself. Any moment he could come in the room and get them captive. He was a Wellizen master and to compete with him in Wellizen was just impossible. Walter quickly took the decision. They will have to get out of that room and that too immediately. Walter opened the door and saw five guards standing outside with guns.

“Kel elodo Fyselon!” he yelled, stretching his hand out towards the guards in a somersault like jump. Brown fumes erupted from his fingers and it divided itself into five jets of brown light which hit the guards and they fell down after ascending to a ten foot height because of the intensity of the shot. The path was clear now. Walter, Louis and Nory rushed from the room running through many bewildered people into the building. They ascended a

staircase and ran on that floor too, not knowing where they were going. Walter could hear gunshots behind him but he never hesitated. They kept ascending floors hitting many people and guards in the way by Restrelin. The building was very huge and they were very tired now. They were breathing fiercely, gasping for breath. Walter wanted to reach the cells but he could not find it anywhere. His mother was in the same building, but where? The building was gigantic. They blindly opened a room on the seventeenth floor and closed it behind them. They hadn't even used the lift either. The exhaustion was fierce and they were perspiring all over. The room wasn't safe either. No room was safe. They searched for Ivel in the room and found it in the extreme left of it. They quickly regained their strength and left that room too. As soon as they left the room, bullet shots could be heard and even felt when all the things around them crashed as soon as the bullets hit on them. The pursuit was getting bloody now. It seemed that Mortati had given orders to get them killed. Just when they were about to reach to the staircase which led upwards, a bullet accurately hit Nory on his back and he fell on the ground, very near to the staircase. Walter and Louis stopped and hid behind a small board which protected them from bullets temporarily.

"Walter, Louis, go. My duty was to protect the map and the map I think is safe. Nobody knows that we have the map. Every one is behind *you* and not the map as I thought. So, my job is done. But Walter your mission is not over. It has just started. Save your mother Walter, go. GO!!" Nory shouted amid the terrible yell of the bullets as it struck things around Walter and Louis. Walter cast one last look at Nory and then sprinted through the staircase with Louis. On every floor, they found a force of soldiers who fired mercilessly at them but they dodged it and hit back.

"Kel elodo Rewanor!!" Walter bellowed, when he could no more tolerate the shower of bullets. The complete floor illuminated perilously with blinding blue light which detonated everything killing over fifteen soldiers. Walter kept ascending floors destroying the entire floors sometimes by the Rewanor move. Louis was perspiring badly and when he touched his shoulder, he found that a bullet had really hit him. He held the wound tightly and sprinted along with Walter. Once again, they entered a small room on the thirtieth floor and stopped there. Walter too found a bullet dent on his left limb. He limped to the room and there, pain overpowered him. This was the second time he had been hit by a bullet but the pain was even greater. Walter saw Louis. He too was lamenting in pain.

"Come on, Louis. We got to get out." Walter said, fighting over his pain. They both staggered out of the room and once again bullets sped towards

them. They picked up any random thing that came to their reach to protect themselves. The atmosphere was chaotic and it was impossible to perform Wellizen which required peace of mind.

“Kel elodo Rewanor!!” Walter yelled but nothing happened. Walter understood. Failure to visualize. Their legs appeared to give away and their body swayed and wobbled but they staggered on, hopelessly. Walter was not seeing either left or right but was just speeding through the shower of bullets which had hit him in two spots by now. Walter was just targeting to reach the terrace, nothing else. Walter had chosen to ascend the building rather than descending because he had seen the security system on the ground floor. It was impossible to escape through that security system and if guards would have surrounded them from the other end, there would have been a sure end of the game.

X

Walter and Louis reached the last floor- the forty fifth floor after over two hours of sprinting and dodging. The last floor was empty and there was not a trace of human soul in it. It was ghostly and silent. They panted their way to the terrace, a huge and high open area at the top of the building. They fell on the ground, all the power of their bodies was dragged out. There were two bullet shots on Walter’s body and one on Louis’s. Blood formed a circular dent around the place where the bullet had hit them and there body gave

away. Walter knew that the mission wasn't over yet. They had not freed Arseferos. Walter reached to the boundary wall of the terrace and rested against it, on his legs. Louis had fallen down and was down on the floor, perhaps unconscious. Walter looked towards the entry of the terrace. Soldiers were storming into the terrace. The mission would end without being completed, Walter turned towards them hopelessly. They were coming quickly surrounding Walter from all sides. This had been another trick of Mortati. Although there were maximum number of soldiers on the last floor, he had ordered them all to hide without creating even the slightest of noise. Even Mortati had his residence on that floor and just next to it were the cells where Seph Smit was held captive. Mortati didn't want Walter to know the location of his personal cells which ensured that he could not get Arseferos free and that was why he allowed Walter to reach the terrace comfortably. When all the soldiers had taken their position, Professor Mortati turned up, in the end, grimly. He was nothing like Walter had imagined Mortati would be. He was a tall man, clean shaved and hefty with jet black eyes, reddened by rage. He glared at Walter, about two feet shorter than him. He stalked towards him and then stopped dead, very close to the boundary wall where Walter was standing. Two soldiers came and tightly put the handcuffs on Walter's wrists, tying his hands behind his back. The power of Wellizen is gone, Walter thought, hopelessly. Louis was still lying on the ground, unconscious.

"Fun time is over, Walter Martin. You played enough games today. You used Wellizen too much today, Walter Martin and this is the end. I thought that you would have some sense but you are the same as that Seph Smit. The way you have destroyed so many floors, killed so many workers, there can be no pardon this time, Walter Martin."

"Where is Mrs. Seph Smit?"

"You are not getting her. You would never get her. She would be killed and you too. You have crossed your limits."

Walter didn't reply. A terrible pain overcame his desire to give an impertinent retort.

"But before you die, you will have to give me the map, Walter Martin. I know you have it. Right there with you. Hand it over to me and the chances of your survival might increase."

"I don't fear death. I want Mrs. Seph Smit to be released. I am not giving you the map."

"Unfortunately Walter, this is not some fairy tale in which you will say kill me and save the lady and I would get impressed and release you and the

lady. This is life, Walter Martin and life is reality however unfair it may sound.” Mortati said, with venom.

“Let us have a battle. One on one. If you win, you get the map and if I win I get Mrs. Seph Smit.” Walter said, not trusting himself either. Mortati smiled.

“You cannot entangle me in some sort of stupid trick.”

“You think I am kidding?”

“Do you have the nerves to stand death, Walter Martin for what you say is loss, is actually death?”

When there is no other choice, Walter said to himself. He had thought of everything but there was really no way left. He was surrounded from all sides by armed soldiers. He could commit suicide but that would be worse than fighting and dying. So, Walter nodded. Mortati smiled mischievously again.

“Open his handcuffs. Before we start, Walter Martin, I want to ask you a question. How did you get out of the house on the Allatone Street?”

“I was never there. I came straight to the house on Market Street by using the tunnel.” Walter said, now that it did not make any difference.

“But the tunnel that I made, the demon’s tunnel as you Galnovians call it, ended in that house itself.”

“Professor, I never used that tunnel. That tunnel could never be entered. You had got it filled up, isn’t it? Professor Loric Hanison made his own tunnel parallel to your one which started from the very same location.” Walter said, indifferently.

“Oh! I see.” Mortati put up the mildest look but he was entirely shaken by hearing this. How mistaken their calculation was! And yet here he was. The boy had come himself to them searching foolishly for his guardian.

“Now is the time to start the Wellizen battle, Walter Martin.” Mortati declared asking his soldiers to back off. All of them took a few paces back and lowered their guns.

“Sir, we must hurry. The distance is more than I thought it is. Speed of seven hundred miles per hour. Duration of the journey, about twenty five minutes. Constant acceleration up to the speed of two thousand miles an hour. Fly due North west. Craft 456- Dulen airliner, Government navigation.”

“Cool.” the pilot said, chewing a chewing gum.

“Sir, please watch out for radar. Put on the radar absorbing layer as soon as you near Nesphereo. We don’t want pursuits to waste our time.”

“Take it easy, nano. You worry for nothing. I will be back successful. Taking off. Due North West. Airport Selontela. Under the orders of that mad cap. Leaving with thirty militia men. Good bye.”

The aircraft, as flat as a single page of paper took off and disappeared in the darkness of the night.

Walter and Mortati stood face to face, their hands clutched into fists.

“Kel elodo Gytory!!” Walter yelled and jumped towards Mortati. A jet of brown light exploded.

“Escalet Frodesis!!” Mortati yelled back and the jet of brown light that had erupted from Walter’s fingers disappeared into mists. Walter stood flabbergasted. Was it that easy to dodge his moves? He wondered.

“Mestalen Losgytesis!!” Mortati yelled and a spectrum of seven colors exploded from his fingers. Walter dodged the jet and it hit the wall which broke down in a trice like a wall of cards and fell far below. The intensity of Mortati’s moves was clearly more than Walter had ever thought one could have. The word that he had just uttered was heard by Walter for the very first time.

“Reality is bitter, Walter Martin. Freswerterata Gytolon!!” Mortati yelled and a jet of purple light erupted. Visualize, Walter told himself. Walter visualized by closing his eyes that he was absorbing that jet of purple light and was using its energy for Restrelin. Energy was the biggest crisis for Walter now. He had eaten last in the afternoon and that too just a bit. Moreover, all his energy had been drained by the long walk to the Main Chancellor Street and after that the long pursuit to finally reach the terrace.

The violet light hit Walter but there was no sensation of pain. He had done it. The energy of that radiation was absorbed by his body and he once again yelled, “KEL ELODO RESTRELIN!!” Nothing happened. Walter could hardly see Mortati’s figure and the rest of the soldiers. He strained his eyes. He saw that Mortati was bending down. Did that hit him? He couldn’t have seen it because of the quality of this radiation. Invisible. But just as fast as he had gone down, he suddenly straightened and shouted, “Yelque Manolgenes!!” As soon as he shouted this, everything went dark. All lights seized to glimmer. The night was complete. This was what the night was supposed to be. This is nature’s law that night should be dark but humans have developed artificial glimmer which can make even night as a day. In of darkness Walter could barely see a torment building up on the terrace. Fierce gulls started wheezing past them and Mortati could be seen in the lightening, still standing with his hands stretched upwards. Suddenly the hurricane

became fierce and even before Walter could do anything the hurricane carried him along with its rotating frame. He was spun in the hurricane just like clothes which are spun mercilessly in the washing machine and then he fell on the ground from some fifty feet height, with his face down. Two bullets shots and a fifty feet fall. That was all his body could tolerate. He lifted his head. The lights were back now. Perhaps it was just a power cut and had coincidentally coincided with Mortati's hurricane move. Mortati could be seen standing like a shadow at a distance, smiling wickedly. Walter pushed his body and got up, back on his legs. Louis was still lying motionless on the floor, his eyes closed and his features tranquil.

"Kel elodo Herasyl!!" Walter yelled, fighting pity. If it would hit Mortati it meant sure death. The jet of black light camouflaged with the dark surroundings but Mortati successfully dodged it and hit Walter with a light jet of yellow light. Even that was good enough for Walter but Walter dodged it and it disappeared in the dark sky.

Twenty-minute journey left.....

The battle was proceeding slowly. Even Mortati was taking some time between his moves to fight exhaustion which was so obvious to be felt after practicing Wellizen.

"Justelot Nonesel!!" Walter yelled. He had learnt this one from the Stiphel Guide. "Kel elodo Rewanor!!!" Walter shrieked. Mortati ducked to the band of violet light that had erupted because of the first move and asked his soldiers to leave the terrace immediately which they did dutifully. The horizon was covered by blue smoke which was about to blast but Mortati bawled, "Escalet Frodesis!" and all the blue light in the sky cleared in a second.

"Manola Dyspentus!! Kel elodo Rewanor!! Kel elodo Gytoryl!! Gythuril Ferostal!! Lotian Nesredyt!!" Walter bellowed, continuously, advancing towards Mortati. The final part of his energy was left and that was all. He could fall any moment now. Bands of multi colored light sped from here and there but Mortati dodged every single band successfully. As a matter of fact it was a competition between a small boy who had learnt Wellizen for just a month and a man who was Wellizen's master.

Walter stopped and fell on his knees. Exhaustion was getting over him. Darkness was falling over him.

"Am I supposed to understand that the game is over, Walter Martin. I suggest, give me the map and you would live. I wouldn't like to miss such a good soldier. I promise I will put you on a high post." Mortati said, walking towards him.

“Kel elodo Restrelin!” Walter screeched and the invisible band hit Mortati in the stomach and he fell on the ground, hissing. One last move would do, Walter thought. Herasyl was required and the game would be won but he could find no strength to get up. His body was exhausted and drained entirely.

“So, you still have the power, eh? I tell you it is a foregone conclusion. You know you cannot win. I want that map from your pocket.” Mortati got up, scratching his head and his expressions were aggrieved.

“I am not giving you anything.” Walter mumbled.

Ten minutes to go.....

“Just as your mother, eh? You cannot win.”

“If I will not win, I will not lose either.”

“Is that so? Well let’s see. Solorin Sceliyadez!!”

Walter rolled on the floor and the jet of black light flew past his ear and hit the wall which crashed into ruins.

“Kel elodo Herasyl!!” Walter shrieked and a black jet of radiation erupted but that too was successfully evaded. The opportunity was gone.

Walter rolled continuously on the floor to protect himself from the repeated lethal shots that Mortati was hitting now. Walter tried to remember something. *A magnet can absorb human radiations for some time*, Professor Harles had said. Walter took out the only magnet that he was carrying with him. The unrecognized magnet which was available on road sides. Its copy wasn’t given to the Government. Its copy wasn’t available with the recognizer too and that was why it was not attracted when the soldiers were behind them in Galnovio. The magnet which had attracted the recognizer was their magnet-made identity card which was recognized. But these types of magnets which were not found in pairs were sold by breaking into two parts for small children to play with. He hurriedly took it out and extended his hand out with it. The radiations disappeared in it. It would work only for some time, Walter knew but he wanted to take the maximum benefit of it. He was rolling on the floor with his back bone down and Mortati was moving very closely to him, yelling curses continuously.

“Neron Gytisul! Velsiferus Dravileto! Heasyl tyrensil! Telon Solatus! Gigitrim –” Mortati suddenly stopped, his mouth wide open and then he fell on the ground and closed his eyes. Walter remained on the floor for some time but when nothing happened for a good time, he looked up. There was a circle of blood on his stomach and another circle on his chest. He was hit by a bullet. But by whom and from where? They both were alone on the terrace and all the soldiers too were sent down stairs when the battle had become extreme. Walter put his hand in his pocket. The map was still there, safe and

undamaged. What had happened so suddenly? Walter looked towards the sky. He could clearly see lights sparkling from something which was descending in height. Tiredness overpowered him and he rested his head on the floor and closed his eyes. He had no energy to walk, no energy to see, no energy to do anything. Slumber was setting upon him. He closed his eyes tightly and gave his body a rest.

XI

Somebody was pushing him; somebody was pouring ivel over him. Walter opened his eyes. Was he alive? Somebody was standing very close to him, speaking something that Walter could not interpret. His mind was tired. But there was urgency in the man's tone and anxiety in his eyes. Walter straightened himself. It was still dark. How long had he slept? One hour, two hours? No, the figure of Mortati was still lying on the floor. It had been just some minutes. Walter concentrated on the man's words but still he couldn't interpret a word. His mind was drowsing off. His mission was not yet completed. Seph Smit, Arseferos was still in prison.

“Mother...My Father.....Seph Smit..?” Walter could barely speak even when he knew that the Smits weren’t his parents.

“Guardians....my guardians....?” Walter now said. The man was still standing very close to him and this time Walter caught his words, “Where are they?”

Walter beckoned towards the staircase to go down a floor. The man backed away and said something to his fellow mates who were standing near him. They were wearing black uniform with black hoods and black masks which covered their faces. Some soldiers ran towards the staircase which Walter had just pointed to and then everything went dark for Walter.

The black soldiers of Dulen rushed towards the last floor of the Nespherean head Office from the terrace and found a battalion of soldiers waiting there. The battalion of soldiers was the group of Nespherean guards who were asked to go down when the battle had become fierce between Walter and Mortati. They were waiting there for quite a good time. They had no idea of what was going on and who these black guards were. Before they could understand anything, the black guards fired at the Nespherean guards with their advanced machine guns which destroyed the battalion within seconds. The black guards moved cautiously through the fort fifth floor, searching for Mortati’s personal prison cells. They entered Mortati’s office and opened the door at the end of this room. The room unveiled the cells, Mortati’s personal cells. They quickly searched through the cells and finally found the woman, Seph Smit lying oblivious on the floor of her cell. They broke into the cell and awoke the woman. She thought that the black guards were Nespherean soldiers and she was frightened but they calmly told her the complete story and got her out of the horrible cell. Gerald Smit, Seph’s husband was taken out of his cell too after telling the complete story. They headed straight to the terrace where Seph Smit was shown to Walter, lying in the corner of the terrace being attended by doctors. Walter’s eyes were closed and his features were tranquil. Louis was attended by another doctor. They all were asked to ascend the craft which was standing on the terrace itself. Seph Smit hugged Walter and all the time Walter rested on her ample bosom. The craft rose without speeding on the runway as was required in most of the Nespherean crafts and disappeared, tracing its way back south west carrying Walter, Louis, Seph Smit and Gerald Smit.

Walter was resting in the plush hospital of Dulen, the only place where one could see sadness in this ocean of peace and contentment. Seph Smit was sitting beside him. She had convalesced entirely and she spent most of her time in sitting beside Walter. Over seven days had passed since the day of Darkness, as the Nesphereans called the day Mortati had passed away.

Walter opened his eyes for the first time in these eight days and held his mother's hand.

"Where am I?" he said, feebly.

"Dulen. The paradise."

"Dulen? Do not kid, Moth—" Walter stopped. What should he call her now? Not Mother surely. Seph Smit sensed this.

"I am sorry, Walter for I never told you about your family and everything. I was under a pledge of secrecy. You can call me Aunt."

Walter didn't say anything for some time but kept staring at her blankly.

"And what did you say? I am kidding? I am not kidding. This truth came as a shock to me too, Walter. Walter you are a citizen of Dulen."

"What? How?"

"This is really amazing, unbelievable and yet truth. Walter your parents, the Martins were Dulen citizens. Even Loric Hanison didn't know this. Your parents kept it a great secret. Actually, when Dulen government came to know that a map has been created to reach the Dulen by Galnovians, the government became desperate to stop people from knowing about the Dulen. So, it sent your father and mother from Dulen to Galnovio as Galnovian citizens to act as scientists and take the map with the excuse that the map was required for research. This way they wanted to get the map in their custody and then they were supposed to leave Galnovio and get the map to Dulen. But the plan went wrong. Government refused to give them the map. They wanted their mission to be completed. So, they took the help of Loric Hanison to get the map. They had to take disastrous step of stealing the map and then return back immediately. They had been dropped by a helicopter when they had come but now, they had to go by foot and this was the main problem. They didn't know that exact way. So, they had to use the map for tracing their way back. They didn't know that Nesphereo lied in the way to reach the Dulen and that was how they were killed. The Dulen government came to know this immediately by the advanced technology that they had developed and they also knew all about you. They couldn't help you because they had to keep the truth in the dark but then when the situation became extreme, they came to help you. The black guards that you must have seen were actually Dulen soldiers."

“But didn’t people see who killed that Mortati?” Walter asked, his heart bubbling on hearing that he was the citizen of paradise.

“He was killed at two o clock in the night. Moreover, I read their newspaper by the secret cameras and saw the news—‘DARK SOCIETY OF NESPHEREO KILLS MORTATI. POLICE PROMISES THAT THE ASSASIN WILL BE CAUGHT BY TOMORROW.’ They have no idea whatsoever. Moreover, Walter you have the map along with you and you have completed the mission on which your parents went. You are Dulen’s citizen! Fancy! No Nesphereo, No Galnovio. Can you believe it?”

“No, I just can’t. All the time I was in Galnovio, I never knew I was being watched very closely by my own people.” Walter smiled. “Well, how is Louis?”

“He is fine. The bullet shots that he got were quite lethal but the doctors have saved him. He is out of danger now.”

“How is Uncle?”

“Gerald? Oh! He is fine. He was fine ages back.

“And what about Nory?”

“I am sorry, Walter. His wound was perilous and he has passed away. He passed away in the building itself.” Seph Smit said, sadly. Walter too lost all his enthusiasm on hearing the tiding and he silently closed his eyes and prayed, for the second time, very seriously for Nory’s soul to rest in peace.

“Aunt,” Walter hesitated, “Will you stay here, along with me, in Dulen?”

“I can’t Walter. My home is in Nesphereo and I got to go. I have to go in the evening today along with Gerald. Louis has got the citizenship of Dulen, though.” Seph Smit smirked.

“What? That’s great! But how?”

“The Dulen authorities said that his help to Walter was praiseworthy and as, Professor Harles still doesn’t know the whole story and still thinks that you and Louis were some kind of spies, Galnovio cannot be safe for him and neither Nesphereo. So, he will be with you here.”

“Aunt, there are many things that I want to ask you.”

“Go on.”

“Aunt, why did Professor Birklee ignore me once I left his house?”

“Walter, actually it was my order. He was telling you too many things which you were not supposed to know at that time. I asked him to stay away from you.”

“And why did he not talk about his son?”

“His son, Walter was convicted for a crime that he did not commit. So, he is in the Galnovian prisons. But, Birklee wants to save his reputation and he never tells anything to anyone.”

“What about that weird mask that he wore sometimes and did not sometimes?”

“That mask, Walter is the Desritok, another weapon or the mask of power. He wears it when he feels he should. There is no particular schedule as to anything. I think you do not know but he is the head of the society which just now, came in front of you. The society whose member was Nory Solido. And that mask, if you look closely is the perfect map of Dulen. Another way of retaining the map of Dulen. That is another worry for the Dulen, to destroy that map too.”

The door of Walter’s room opened suddenly and in came a man in a black uniform. He had a rigid face but a very kind smile.

“Good Afternoon, Walter. How are you now?” the man asked.

“I am fine.” Walter could just say. The man bowed low and smiled.

“I am Julian Martin, your father’s brother. I will be your guardian from now onwards.”

“But what about Louis?”

“He will live with us. It makes no difference to him. His parents will be sent a notice. Galnovio and Nesphereo aren’t safe for him.”

Walter straightened in his bed. The place where everyone dreamt of going, the place of prosperity, he was the citizen of that place.

“I want to meet Louis.”

“Sure.” Seph Smit got a wheel chair for him where he sat and was wheeled to Louis’s room. Louis was sitting erect with a doctor checking him up. Louis smiled as soon as he saw Walter. Walter grinned back. A desire to talk to his friend, talk endlessly, came over him.

“How are you, man?” Louis asked, frailly.

“I should ask how you are?”

“I am fine.” Louis smiled. “I heard that you dueled with Mortati. Did you really do it?”

Walter nodded blushing.

“I heard that you almost defeated him?” Louis joked.

“Defeated? He almost killed me. That gory man kept yelling curses at me continuously and I rolled about on the floor with the magnet clutched in my hand. Another five minutes and that beast could have killed me.” Walter said.

“Don’t you feel like going out and looking at the place where everyone dreams to be?”

“Come on.” Walter said and they both were wheeled out of the hospital and upon a short hill near by. The beauty was ecstatic. All around them were tall trees, forming a perfect circle around the small city of Dulen which was

clearly visible from this height. *Nature and Dulen works in coordination. Nature protects the Dulen.* Now Walter could understand its meaning. All around them were tall mountains, surrounding the Dulen from all sides behind the philosopher-like tall trees, without giving any rent in between. Wherever they could see, there was greenery and yellowish glow on the ground. Who could possibly know that this very place was the storehouse of oldest of civilizations, latest of technologies and greatest of geniuses?

THE END