ATLANTIS
By Orson Scott Card

Kemal Akyazi grew up within a few miles of the ruins of Troy; from his boyhood home above Kumkale he could see the waters of the Dardanelles, the narrow strait that connects the waters of the Black Sea with the Aegean. Many a war had been fought on both sides of that strait, one of which had produced the great epic of Homer's ILIAD.

This pressure of history had a strange influence on Kemal as a child. He learned all the tales of the place, of course, but he also knew that the tales were Greek, and the place was of the Greek Aegean world. Kemal was a Turk; his own ancestors had not come to the Dardanelles until the fifteenth century. He felt that it was a powerful place, but it did not belong to him. So the ILIAD was not the story that spoke to Kemal's soul. Rather it was the story of Heinrich Schliemann, the German explorer who, in an era when Troy had been regarded as a mere legend, a myth, a fiction, had been sure not only that Troy was real but also where it was. Despite all scoffers, he mounted an expedition and found it and unburied it. The old stories turned out to be true.

In his teens Kemal thought it was the greatest tragedy of his life that Pastwatch had to use machines to look through the the millennia of human history. There would be no more Schliemanns, studying and pondering and guessing until they found some artifact, some ruin of a long-lost city, some remnant of a legend made true again. Thus Kemal had no interest in joining Pastwatch. It was not history that he hungered for--it was exploration and discovery that he wanted, and what was the glory in finding the truth through a machine?

So, after an abortive try at physics, he studied to become a meteorologist. At the age of eighteen, heavily immersed in the study of climate and weather, he touched again on the findings of Pastwatch. No longer did meteorologists have to depend on only a few centuries of weather measurements and fragmentary fossil evidence to determine long-range patterns. Now they had accurate accounts of storm patterns for millions of years. Indeed, in the earliest years of Pastwatch, the machinery had been so coarse that individual humans could not be seen. It was like time-lapse photography in which people don't remain in place long enough to be on more than a single frame of the film, making them invisible. So in those days Pastwatch recorded the weather of the past, erosion patterns, volcanic eruptions, ice ages, climatic shifts.

All that data was the bedrock on which modern weather prediction and control rested. Meteorologists could see developing patterns and, without disrupting the overall pattern, could make tiny changes that prevented any one area from going completely rainless during a time

of drought, or sunless during a wet growing season. They had taken the sharp edge off the relentless scythe of climate, and now the great project was to determine how they might make a more serious change, to bring a steady pattern of light rain to the desert regions of the world, to restore the prairies and savannahs that they once had been. That was the work that Kemal wanted to be a part of.

Yet he could not bring himself out from the shadow of Troy, the memory of Schliemann. Even as he studied the climatic shifts involved with the waxing and waning of the ice ages, his mind contained fleeting images of lost civilizations, legendary places that waited for a Schliemann to uncover them.

His project for his degree in meteorology was part of the effort to determine how the Red Sea might be exploited to develop dependable rains for either the Sudan or central Arabia; Kemal's immediate target was to study thedifference between weather patterns during the last ice age, when the Red Sea had all but disappeared, and the present, with the Red Sea at its fullest. Back and forth he went through the coarse old Pastwatch recordings, gathering data on sea level and on precipitation at selected points inland. The old TruSite I had been imprecise at best, but good enough for counting rainstorms.

Time after time Kemal would cycle through the up-and-down fluctuations of the Red Sea, watching as the average sea level gradually rose toward the end of the Ice Age. He always stopped, of course, at the abrupt jump in sea level that marked the rejoining of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. After that, the Red Sea was useless for his purposes, since its sea level was tied to that of the great world ocean.

But the echo of Schliemann inside Kemal's mind made him think: What a flood that must have been.

What a flood. The Ice Age had locked up so much water in glaciers and ice sheets that the sea level of the whole world fell. It eventually reached a low enough point that land bridges arose out of the sea. In the north Pacific, the Bering land bridge allowed the ancestors of the Indies to cross on foot into their great empty homeland. Britain and Flanders were joined. The Dardanelles were closed and the Black Sea became a salty lake. The Persian Gulf disappeared and became a great plain cut by the Euphrates. And the Bab al Mandab, the strait at the mouth of the Red Sea, became a land bridge.

But a land bridge is also a dam. As the world climate warmed and the glaciers began to release their pent-up water, the rains fell heavily everywhere; rivers swelled and the seas rose. The great south-flowing rivers of Europe, which had been mostly dry during the peak of glaciation, now were massive torrents. The Rhone, the Po,

the Strimon, the Danube poured so much water into the Mediterranean and the Black Sea that their water level rose at about the same rate as that of the great world ocean.

The Red Sea had no great rivers, however. It was a new sea, formed by rifting between the new Arabian plate and the African, which meant it had uplift ridges on both coasts. Many rivers and streams flowed from those ridges down into the Red Sea, but none of them carried much water compared to the rivers that drained vast basins and carried the melt-off of the glaciers of the north. So, while the Red Sea gradually rose during this time, it lagged far, far behind the great world ocean. Its water level responded to the immediate local weather patterns rather than to worldwide weather.

Then one day the Indian Ocean rose so high that tides began to spill over the Bab al Mandab. The water cut new channels in the grassland there. Over a period of several years, the leakage grew, creating a series of large new tidal lakes on the Hanish Plain. And then one day, some fourteen thousand years ago, the flow cut a channel so deep that it didn't dry up at low tide, and the water kept flowing, cutting the channel deeper and deeper, until those tidal lakes were full, and brimmed over. With the weight of the Indian Ocean behind it the water gushed into the basin of the Red Sea in a vast flood that in a few days brought the Red Sea up to the level of the world ocean.

This isn't just the boundary marker between useful and useless water level data, thought Kemal. This is a cataclysm, one of the rare times when a single event changes vast reaches of land in a period of time short enough that human beings could notice it. And, for once, this cataclysm happened in an era when human beings were there. It was not only possible but likely that someone saw this flood--indeed, that it killed many, for the southern end of the Red Sea basin was rich savannah and marshes up to the moment when the ocean broke through, and surely the humans of fourteen thousand years ago would have hunted there. Would have gathered seeds and fruits and berries there. Some hunting party must have seen, from the peaks of the Dehalak mountains, the great walls of water that roared up the plain, breaking and parting around the slopes of the Dehalaks, making islands of them.

Such a hunting party would have known that their families had been killed by this water. What would they have thought? Surely that some god was angry with them. That the world had been done away, buried under the sea. And if they survived, if they found a way to the Eritrean shore after the great turbulent waves settled down to the more placid waters of the new, deeper sea, they would tell the tale to anyone who would listen. And for a few years they could take their hearers to the water's edge, show them the treetops barely rising above the surface of the sea, and tell them tales of all that

had been buried under the waves.

Noah, thought Kemal. Gilgamesh. Atlantis. The stories were believed. The stories were remembered. Of course they forgot where it happened--the civilizations that learned to write their stories naturally transposed the events to locations that they knew. But they remembered the things that mattered. What did the flood story of Noah say? Not just rain, no, it wasn't a flood caused by rain alone. The "fountains of the great deep" broke open. No local flood on the Mesopotamian plain would cause that image to be part of the story. But the great wall of water from the Indian Ocean, coming on the heels of years of steadily increasing rain--THAT would bring those words to the storytellers' lips, generation after generation, for ten thousand years until they could be written down.

As for Atlantis, everyone was so sure they had found it years ago. Santorini--Thios--the Aegean island that blew up. But the oldest stories of Atlantis said nothing of blowing up in a volcano. They spoke only of the great civilization sinking into the sea. The supposition was that later visitors came to Santorini and, seeing water where an island city used to be, assumed that it had sunk, knowing nothing of the volcanic eruption. To Kemal, however, this now seemed far-fetched indeed, compared to the way it would have looked to the people of Atlantis themselves, somewhere on the Mits'iwa Plain, when the Red Sea seemed to leap up in its bed, engulfing the city. THAT would be sinking into the sea! No explosion, just water. And if the city were in the marshes of what was now the Mits'iwa Channel, the water would have come, not just from the southeast, but from the northeast and the north as well, flowing among and around the Dehalak mountains, making islands of them and swallowing up the marshes and the city with them.

Atlantis. Not beyond the pillars of Hercules, but Plato was right to associate the city with a strait. He, or whoever told the tale to him, simply replaced the Bab al Mandab with the greatest strait that he had heard of. The story might well have reached him by way of Phoenicia, where Mediterranean sailors would have made the story fit the sea they knew. They learned it from Egyptians, perhaps, or nomad wanderers from the hinterlands of Arabia, and "within the straits of Mandab" would quickly have become "within the pillars of Hercules," and then, because the Mediterranean itself was not strange and exotic enough, the locale was moved outside the pillars of Hercules.

All these suppositions came to Kemal with absolute certainty that they were true, or nearly true. He rejoiced at the thought of it: There was still an ancient civilization left to discover.

Everyone knew that Naog of the Derku People was going to be a tall

man when he grew up, because his father and mother were both tall and he was an unusually large baby. He was born in floodwater season, when all the Engu clan lived on reed boats. Their food supply, including the precious seed for next year's planting, was kept dry in the seedboats, which were like floating huts of plaited reeds. The people themselves, though, rode out the flood on the open dragonboats, bundles of reeds which they straddled as if they were riding a crocodile--which, according to legend, was how the dragonboats began, when the first Derku woman, Gweia, saved herself and her baby from the flood by climbing onto the back of a huge crocodile. The crocodile--the first Great Derku, or dragon--endured their weight until they reached a tree they could climb, whereupon the dragon swam away. So when the Derku people plaited reeds into long thick bundles and climbed aboard, they believed that secret of the dragonboats had been given to them by the Great Derku, and in a sense they were riding on his back.

During the raiding season, other nearby tribes had soon learned to fear the coming of the dragonboats, for they always carried off captives who, in those early days, were never seen again. In other tribes when someone was said to have been carried off by the crocodiles, it was the Derku people they meant, for it was well know that all the clans of the Derku worshipped the crocodile as their savior and god, and fed their captives to a dragon that lived in the center of their city.

At Naog's birthtime, the Engu clan were nestled among their tether trees as the flooding Selud River flowed mudbrown underneath them. If Naog had pushed his way out of the womb a few weeks later, as the waters were receding, his mother would have given birth in one of the seedboats. But Naog came early, before highwater, and so the seedboats were still full of grain. During floodwater, they could neither grind the grain into flour nor build cooking fires, and thus had to eat the seeds in raw handfuls. Thus it was forbidden to spill blood on the grain, even birthblood; no one would touch grain that had human blood on it, for that was the juice of the forbidden fruit.

This was why Naog's mother, Lewik, could not hide alone in an enclosed seedboat for the birthing. Instead she had to give birth out in the open, on one of the dragonboats. She clung to a branch of a tether tree as two women on their own dragonboats held hers steady. From a near distance Naog's father, Twerk, could not hide his mortification that his new young wife was giving birth in full view, not only of the women, but of the men and boys of the tribe. Not that any but the youngest and stupidest of the men was overtly looking. Partly because of respect for the event of birth itself, and partly because of a keen awareness that Twerk could cripple any man of the Engu that he wanted to, the men paddled their boats

toward the farthest tether trees, herding the boys along with them. There they busied themselves with the work of floodwater season--twining ropes and weaving baskets.

Twerk himself, however, could not keep from looking. He finally left his dragonboat and climbed his tree and watched. The women had brought their dragonboats in a large circle around the woman in travail. Those with children clinging to them or bound to them kept their boats on the fringes--they would be little help, with their hands full already. It was the older women and the young girls who were in close, the older women to help, the younger ones to learn. But Twerk had no eyes for the other women today. It was his wide-eyed, sweating wife that he watched. It frightened him to see her in such pain, for Lewik was usually the healer, giving herbs and ground-up roots to others to take away pain or cure a sickness. It also bothered him to see that as she squatted on her dragonboat, clinging with both hands to the branch above her head, neither she nor any of the other women was in position to catch the baby when it dropped out. It would fall into the water, he knew, and it would die, and then he and everyone else would know that it had been wrong of him to marry this woman who should have been a servant of the crocodile god, the Great Derku.

When he could not contain himself a moment longer, Twerk shouted to the women: "Who will catch the baby?"

Oh, how they laughed at him, when at last they understood what he was saying. "Derku will catch him!" they retorted, jeering, and the men around him also laughed, for that could mean several things. It could mean that the god would provide for the child's safety, or it could mean that the flood would catch the child, for the flood was also called derkuwed, or dragonwater, partly because it was aswarm with crocodiles swept away from their usual lairs, and partly because the floodwater slithered down from the mountains like a crocodile sliding down into the water, quick and powerful and strong, ready to sweep away and swallow up the unwary. Derku will catch him indeed!

The men began predicting what the child would be named. "He will be Rogogu, because we all laughed," said one. Another said, "It will be a girl and she will be named Mehug, because she will be spilled into the water as she plops out!" They guessed that the child would be named for the fact that Twerk watched the birth; for the branch that Lewik clung to or the tree that Twerk climbed; or for the dragonwater itself, into which they imagined the child spilling and then being drawn out with the embrace of the god still dripping from him. Indeed, because of this notion Derkuwed became a childhood nickname for Lewik's and Twerk's baby, and later it was one of the

names by which his story was told over and over again in faraway lands that had never heard of dragonwater or seen a crocodile, but it was not his real name, not what his father gave him to be his man-name when he came of age.

After much pushing, Lewik's baby finally emerged. First came the head, dangling between her ankles like the fruit of a tree--that was why the word for HEAD and was the same as the word for FRUIT in the language of the Derku people. Then as the newborn's head touched the bound reeds of the dragonboat, Lewik rolled her eyes in pain and waddled slowly backward, so that the baby flopped out of her body stretched along the length of the boat. He did not fall into the water, because his mother had made sure of it.

"Little man!" cried all the women as soon as they saw the sex of the child.

Lewik grunted out her firstborn's baby-name. "Glogmeriss," she said. GLOG meant "thorn" and MERISS meant "trouble"; together, they made the term that the Derku used for annoyances that turned out all right in the end, but which were quite painful at the time. There were some who thought that she wasn't naming the baby at all, but simply commenting on the situation, but it was the first thing she said and so it would be his name until he left the company of women and joined the men.

As soon as the afterbirth dropped onto the dragonboat, all the other women paddled nearer--like a swarm of gnats, thought Twerk, still watching. Some helped Lewik pry her hands loose from the tree branch and lie down on her dragonboat. Others took the baby and passed it from hand to hand, each one washing a bit of the blood from the baby. The afterbirth got passed with the baby at first, often dropping into the floodwater, until at last it reached the cutting woman, who severed the umbilical cord with a flint blade. Twerk, seeing this for the first time, realized that this might be how he got his name, which meant "cutting" or "breaking." Had his father seen this remarkable thing, too, the women cutting a baby off from this strange belly-tail? No wonder he named him for it.

But the thing that Twerk could not get out of his mind was the fact that his Lewik had taken off her napron in full view of the clan, and all the men had seen her nakedness, despite their efforts to pretend that they had not. Twerk knew that this would become a joke among the men, a story talked about whenever he was not with them, and this would weaken him and mean that he would never be the clan leader, for one can never give such respect to a man that one laughs about behind his back.

Twerk could think of only one way to keep this from having the power to hurt him, and that was to confront it openly so that no one would laugh behind his back. "His name is Naog!" cried Twerk decisively, almost as soon as the baby was fully washed in river water and the

placenta set loose to float away on the flood.
"You are such a stupid man!" cried Lewik from her dragonboat. Everyone laughed, but in this case it was all right. Everyone knew Lewik was a bold woman who said whatever she liked to any man. That was why it was such a mark of honor that Twerk had chosen to take her as wife and she had taken him for husband--it took a strong man to laugh when his wife said disrespectful things to him. "Of course he's naog," she said. "All babies are born naked."
"I call him Naog because YOU were naked in front of all the clan," answered Twerk. "Yes, I know you all looked when you thought I couldn't see," he chided the men. "I don't mind a bit. You all saw my Lewik naked when the baby came out of her--but what matters is that only I saw her naked when I put the baby in!"
That made them all laugh, even Lewik, and the story was often repeated. Even before he became a man and gave up the baby-name Glogmeriss, Naog had often heard the tale of why he would have such a silly name--so often, in fact, that he determined that one day he would do such great deeds that when the people heard the word NAOG they would think first of him and his accomplishments, before they remembered that the name was also the word for the tabu condition of taking the napron off one's secret parts in public.
As he grew up, he knew that the water of derkuwed on him as a baby had touched him with greatness. It seemed he was always taller than the other boys, and he reached puberty first, his young body powerfully muscled by the labor of dredging the canals right among the slaves of the dragon during mudwater season. He wasn't much more than twelve floodwaters old when the grown men began clamoring for him to be given his manhood journey early so that he could join them in slave raids--his sheer size would dishearten many an enemy, making them despair and throw down his club or his spear. But Twerk was adamant. He would not tempt Great Derku to devour his son by letting the boy get ahead of himself. Naog might be large of body, but that didn't mean that he could get away with taking a man's role before he had learned all the skills and lore that a man had to acquire in order to survive.
This was all fine with Naog. He knew that he would have his place in the clan in due time. He worked hard to learn all the skills of manhood--how to fight with any weapon; how to paddle his dragonboat straight on course, yet silently; how to recognize the signs of the seasons and the directions of the stars at different hours of the night and times of the year; which wild herbs were good to eat, and which deadly; how to kill an animal and dress it so it would keep long enough to bring home for a wife to eat. Twerk often said that his son was as quick to learn things requiring wit and memory as to learn skills that depended only on size and strength and quickness.
What Twerk did not know, what no one even guessed, was that these

tasks barely occupied Naog's mind. What he dreamed of, what he thought of constantly, was how to become a great man so that his name could be spoken with solemn honor instead of a smile or laughter.

One of Naog's strongest memories was a visit to the Great Derku in the holy pond at the very center of the great circular canals that linked all the Derku people together. Every year during the mud season, the first dredging was the holy pond, and no slaves were used for THAT. No, the Derku men and women, the great and the obscure, dredged the mud out of the holy pond, carried it away in baskets, and heap it up in piles that formed a round lumpen wall around the pond. As the dry season came, crocodiles a-wandering in search of water would smell the pond and come through the gaps in the wall to drink it and bathe in it. The crocodiles knew nothing of danger from coming within walls. Why would they have learned to fear the works of humans? What other people in all the world had ever built such a thing? So the crocodiles came and wallowed in the water, heedless of the men watching from trees. At the first full moon of the dry season, as the crocodiles lay stupidly in the water during the cool of night, the men dropped from the trees and quietly filled the gaps in the walls with earth. At dawn, the largest crocodile in the pond was hailed as Great Derku for the year. The rest were killed with spears in the bloodiest most wonderful festival of the year.

The year that Naog turned six, the Great Derku was the largest crocodile that anyone could remember ever seeing. It was a dragon indeed, and after the men of raiding age came home from the blood moon festival full of stories about this extraordinary Great Derku, all the families in all the clans began bringing their children to see it.

"They say it's a crocodile who was Great Derku many years ago," said Naog's mother. "He has returned to our pond in hopes of the offerings of manfruit that we used to give to the dragon. But some say he's the very one who was Great Derku the year of the forbidding, when he refused to eat any of the captives we offered him."

"And how would they know?" said Twerk, ridiculing the idea. "Is there anyone alive now who was alive then, to recognize him? And how could a crocodile live so long?"

"The Great Derku lives forever," said Lewik.

"Yes, but the true dragon is the derkuwed, the water in flood," said Twerk, "and the crocodiles are only its children."

To the child, Naog, these words had another meaning, for he had heard the word DERKUWED far more often in reference to himself, as

his nickname, than in reference to the great annual flood. So to him it sounded as though his father was saying that HE was the true dragon, and the crocodiles were his children. Almost at once he realized what was actually meant, but the impression lingered in the back of his mind.

"And couldn't the derkuwed preserve one of its children to come back to us to be our god a second time?" said Lewik. "Or are you suddenly a holy man who knows what the dragon is saying?"

"All this talk about this Great Derku being one of the ancient ones brought back to us is dangerous," said Twerk. "Do you want us to return to the terrible days when we fed manfruit to the Great Derku? When our captives were all torn to pieces by the god, while WE, men and women alike, had to dig out all the canals without slaves?"

"There weren't so many canals then," said Lewik. "Father said."

"Then it must be true," said Twerk, "if your old father said it. So think about it. Why are there so many canals now, and why are they so long and deep? Because we put our captives to work dredging our canals and making our boats. What if the Great Derku had never refused to eat manfruit? We would not have such a great city here, and other tribes would not bring us gifts and even their own children as slaves. They can come and visit our captives, and even buy them back from us. That's why we're not hated and feared, but rather
LOVED and feared in all the lands from the Nile to the Salty Sea."

Naog knew that his father's manhood journey had been from the Salty Sea all the way up the mountains and across endless grasslands to the great river of the west. It was a legendary journey, fitting for such a large man. So Naog knew that he would have to undertake an even greater journey. But of that he said nothing.

"But these people talking stupidly about this being that same Great Derku returned to us again--don't you realize that they will want to put it to the test again, and offer it manfruit? And what if the Great Derku EATS it this time? What do we do then, go back to doing all the dredging ourselves? Or let the canals fill in so we can't float the seedboats from village to village during the dry season, and so we have no defense from our enemies and no way to ride our dragonboats all year?"

Others in the clan were listening to this argument, since there was little enough privacy under normal circumstances, and none at all when you spoke with a raised voice. So it was no surprise when they chimed in. One offered the opinion that the reason no manfruit should be offered to this Great Derku was because the eating of manfruit would give the Great Derku knowledge of all the thoughts of the people they ate. Another was afraid that the sight of a powerful creature eating the flesh of men would lead some of the young people to want to commit the unpardonable sin of eating that forbidden

fruit themselves, and in that case all the Derku people would be destroyed.

What no one pointed out was that in the old days, when they fed manfruit to the Great Derku, it wasn't JUST captives that were offered. During years of little rain or too much rain, the leader of each clan always offered his own eldest son as the first fruit, or, if he could not bear to see his son devoured, he would offer himself in his son's place--though some said that in the earliest times it was always the leader himself who was eaten, and they only started offering their sons as a cowardly substitute. By now everyone expected Twerk to be the next clan leader, and everyone knew that he doted on his Glogmeriss, his Naog-to-be, his Derkuwed, and that he would never throw his son to the crocodile god. Nor did any of them wish him to do so. A few people in the other clans might urge the test of offering manfruit to the Great Derku, but most of the people in all of the tribes, and all of the people in Engu clan, would oppose it, and so it would not happen.

So it was with an assurance of personal safety that Twerk brought his firstborn son with him to see the Great Derku in the holy pond. But six-year- old Glogmeriss, oblivious to the personal danger that would come from the return of human sacrifice, was terrified at the sight of the holy pond itself. It was surrounded by a low wall of dried mud, for once the crocodile had found its way to the water inside, the gaps in the wall were closed. But what kept the Great Derku inside was not just the mud wall. It was the row on row of sharpened horizontal stakes pointing straight inward, set into the mud and lashed to sharp vertical stakes about a hand's-breadth back from the point. The captive dragon could neither push the stakes out of the way nor break them off. Only when the floodwater came and the river spilled over the top of the mud wall and swept it away, stakes and all, would that year's Great Derku be set free. Only rarely did the Great Derku get caught on the stakes and die, and when it happened it was regarded as a very bad omen.

This year, though, the wall of stakes was not widely regarded as enough assurance that the dragon could not force his way out, he was so huge and clever and strong. So men stood guard constantly, spears in hand, ready to prod the Great Derku and herd it back into place, should it come dangerously close to escaping.

The sight of spikes and spears was alarming enough, for it looked like war to young Glogmeriss. But he soon forgot those puny sticks when he caught sight of the Great Derku himself, as he shambled up on the muddy, grassy shore of the pond. Of course Glogmeriss had seen crocodiles all his life; one of the first skills any child, male or female, had to learn was how to use a spear to poke a crocodile so it would leave one's dragonboat--and therefore one's arms and legs--in peace. This crocodile, though, this dragon, this

god, was so huge that Glogmeriss could easily imagine it swallowing him whole without having to bite him in half or even chew. Glogmeriss gasped and clung to his father's hand.

"A giant indeed," said his father. "Look at those legs, that powerful tail. But remember that the Great Derku is but a weak child compared to the power of the flood."

Perhaps because human sacrifice was still on his mind, Twerk then told his son how it had been in the old days. "When it was a captive we offered as manfruit, there was always a chance that the god would let him live. Of course, if he clung to the stakes and refused to go into the pond, we would never let him out alive--we poked him with our spears. But if he went boldly into the water so far that it covered his head completely, and then came back out alive and made it back to the stakes without the Great Derku taking him and eating him, well, then, we brought him out in great honor. We said that his old life ended in that water, that the man we had captured had been buried in the holy pond, and now he was born again out of the flood. He was a full member of the tribe then, of the same clan as the man who had captured him. But of course the Great Derku almost never let anyone out alive, because we always kept him hungry."

"YOU poked him with your spear?" asked Glogmeriss.

"Well, not me personally. When I said that WE did it, I meant of course the men of the Derku. But it was long before I was born. It was in my grandfather's time, when he was a young man, that there came a Great Derku who wouldn't eat any of the captives who were offered to him. No one knew what it meant, of course, but all the captives were coming out and expecting to be adopted into the tribe. But if THAT had happened, the captives would have been the largest clan of all, and where would we have found wives for them all? So the holy men and the clan leaders realized that the old way was over, that the god no longer wanted manfruit, and therefore those who survived after being buried in the water of the holy pond were NOT adopted into the Derku people. But we did keep them alive and set them to work on the canals. That year, with the captives working alongside us, we dredged the canals deeper than ever, and we were able to draw twice the water from the canals into the fields of grain during the dry season, and when we had a bigger harvest than ever before, we had hands enough to weave more seedboats to contain it. Then we realized what the god had meant by refusing to eat the manfruit. Instead of swallowing our captives into the belly of the water where the god lives, the god was giving them all back to us, to make us rich and strong. So from that day on we have fed no captives to the Great Derku. Instead we hunt for meat and bring it back, while the women and old men make the captives do the labor of

the city. In those days we had one large canal. Now we have three great canals encircling each other, and several other canals cutting across them, so that even in the dryest season a Derku man can glide on his dragonboat like a crocodile from any part of our land to any other, and never have to drag it across dry earth. This is the greatest gift of the dragon to us, that we can have the labor of our captives instead of the Great Derku devouring them himself."

"It's not a bad gift to the captives, either," said Glogmeriss. "Not to die."

Twerk laughed and rubbed his son's hair. "Not a bad gift at that," he said.

"Of course, if the Great Derku really loved the captives he would let them go home to their families."

Twerk laughed even louder. "They have no families, foolish boy," he said. "When a man is captured, he is dead as far as his family is concerned. His woman marries someone else, his children forget him and call another man father. He has no more home to return to."

"Don't some of the ugly-noise people buy captives back?"

"The weak and foolish ones do. The gold ring on my arm was the price of a captive. The father-of-all priest wears a cape of bright feathers that was the ransom of a boy not much older than you, not long after you were born. But most captives know better than to hope for ransom. What does THEIR tribe have that we want?"

"I would hate to be a captive, then," said Glogmeriss. "Or would YOU be weak and foolish enough to ransom me?"

"You?" Twerk laughed out loud. "You're a Derku man, or will be. We take captives wherever we want, but where is the tribe so bold that it dares to take one of US? No, we are never captives. And the captives we take are lucky to be brought out of their poor, miserable tribes of wandering hunters or berry-pickers and allowed to live here among wall-building men, among canal- digging people, where they don't have to wander in search of food every day, where they get plenty to eat all year long, twice as much as they ever ate before."

"I would still hate to be one of them," said Glogmeriss. "Because how could you ever do great things that everyone will talk about and tell stories about and remember, if you're a captive?"

All this time that they stood on the wall and talked, Glogmeriss never took his eyes off the Great Derku. It was a terrible creature, and when it yawned it seemed its mouth was large enough to swallow a tree. Ten grown men could ride on its back like a dragonboat. Worst of all were the eyes, which seemed to stare into a man's heart. It was probably the eyes of the dragon that gave it its name, for DERKU could easily have originated as a shortened form of DERK-UNT, which meant "one who sees." When the ancient ancestors of the Derku people first came to this floodplain, the crocodiles floating like logs on

the water must have fooled them. They must have learned to look for eyes on the logs. "Look!" the watcher would cry. "There's one with eyes! Derk-unt!" They said that if you looked in the dragon's eyes, he would draw you toward him, within reach of his huge jaws, within reach of his curling tail, and you would never even notice your danger, because his eyes held you. Even when the jaws opened to show the pink mouth, the teeth like rows of bright flame ready to burn you, you would look at that steady, all-knowing, wise, amused, and coolly angry eye.

That was the fear that filled Glogmeriss the whole time he stood on the wall beside his father. For a moment, though, just after he spoke of doing great things, a curious change came over him. For a moment Glogmeriss stopped fearing the Great Derku, and instead imagined that he WAS the giant crocodile. Didn't a man paddle his dragonboat by lying on his belly straddling the bundled reeds, paddling with his hands and kicking with his feet just as a crocodile did under the water? So all men became dragons, in a way. And Glogmeriss would grow up to be a large man, everyone said so. Among men he would be as extraordinary as the Great Derku was among crocodiles. Like the god, he would seem dangerous and strike fear into the hearts of smaller people. And, again like the god, he would actually be kind, and not destroy them, but instead help them and do good for them.

Like the river in flood. A frightening thing, to have the water rise so high, sweeping away the mud hills on which they had built the seedboats, smearing the outsides of them with sun-heated tar so they would be watertight when the flood came. Like the Great Derku, the flood seemed to be a destroyer. And yet when the water receded, the land was wet and rich, ready to receive the seed and give back huge harvests. The land farther up the slopesof the mountains was salty and stony and all that could grow on it was grass. It was here in the flatlands where the flood tore through like a mad dragon that the soil was rich and trees could grow.

I will BE the Derkuwed. Not as a destroyer, but as a lifebringer. The real Derku, the true dragon, could never be trapped in a cage as this poor crocodile has been. The true dragon comes like the flood and tears away the walls and sets the Great Derku crocodile free and makes the soil wet and black and rich. Like the river, I will be another tool of the god, another manifestation of the power of the god in the world. If that was not what the dragon of the deep heaven of the sea intended, why would he have make Glogmeriss so tall and strong?

This was still the belief in his heart when Glogmeriss set out on his manhood journey at the age of fourteen. He was already the tallest man in his clan and one of the tallest among all the Derku people. He was a giant, and yet well-liked because he never used his

strength and size to frighten other people into doing what he wanted; on the contrary, he seemed always to protect the weaker boys. Many people felt that it was a shame that when he returned from his manhood journey, the name he would be given was a silly one like Naog. But when they said as much in Glogmeriss's hearing, he only laughed at them and said, "The name will only be silly if it is borne by a silly man. I hope not to be a silly man."

Glogmeriss's father had made his fame by taking his manhood journey from the Salty Sea to the Nile. Glogmeriss's journey therefore had to be even more challenging and more glorious. He would go south and east, along the crest of the plateau until he reached the legendary place called the Heaving Sea, where the gods that dwelt in its deep heaven were so restless that the water splashed onto the shore in great waves all the time, even when there was no wind. If there was such a sea, Glogmeriss would find it. When he came back as a man with such a tale, they would call him Naog and none of them would laugh.

Kemal Akyazi knew that Atlantis had to be there under the waters of the Red Sea; but why hadn't Pastwatch found it? The answer was simple enough. The past was huge, and while the TruSite I had been used to collect climatalogical information, the new machines that were precise enough that could track individual human beings would never have been used to look at oceans where nobody lived. Yes, the Tempoview had explored the Bering Strait and the English Channel, but that was to track long-known-of migrations. There was no such migration in the Red Sea. Pastwatch had simply never looked through their precise new machines to see what was under the water of the Red Sea in the waning centuries of the last Ice Age. And they never WOULD look, either, unless someone gave them a compelling reason.

Kemal understood bureaucracy enough to know that he, a student meteorologist, would hardly be taken seriously if he brought an Atlantis theory to Pastwatch--particularly a theory that put Atlantis in the Red Sea of all places, and fourteen thousand years ago, no less, long before civilizations arose in Sumeria or Egypt, let alone China or the Indus Valley or among the swamps of Tehuantapec.

Yet Kemal also knew that the setting would have been right for a civilization to grow in the marshy land of the Mits'iwa Channel. Though there weren't enough rivers flowing into the Red Sea to fill it at the same rate as the world ocean, there were still rivers. For instance, the Zula, which still had enough water to flow even today, watered the whole length of the Mits'iwa Plain and flowed down into the rump of the Red Sea near Mersa Mubarek. And, because of the different rainfall patterns of that time, there was a large and

dependable river flowing out of the Assahara basin. Assahara was now a dry valley below sea level, but then would have been a freshwater lake fed by many rivers and spilling over the lowest point into the Mits'iwa Channel. The river meandered along the nearly level Mits'iwa Plain, with some branches of it joining the Zula River, and some wandering east and north to form several mouths in the Red Sea.

Thus dependable sources of fresh water fed the area, and in rainy season the Zula, at least, would have brought new silt to freshen the soil, and in all seasons the wandering flatwater rivers would have provided a means of transportation through the marshes. The climate was also dependably warm, with plenty of sunlight and a long growing season. There was no early civilization that did not grow up in such a setting. There was no reason such a civilization might not have grown up then.

Yes, it was six or seven thousand years too early. But couldn't it be that it was the very destruction of Atlantis that convinced the survivors that the gods did not want human beings to gather together in cities? Weren't there hints of that anti-civilization bias lingering in many of the ancient religions of the Middle East? What was the story of Cain and Abel, if not a metaphorical expression of the evil of the city-dweller, the farmer, the brother-killer who is judged unworthy by the gods because he does not wander with his sheep? Couldn't such stories have circulated widely in those ancient times? That would explain why the survivors of Atlantis hadn't immediately begun to rebuild their civilization at another site: They knew that the gods forbade it, that if they built again their city would be destroyed again. So they remembered the stories of their glorious past, and at the same time condemned their ancestors and warned everyone they met against people gathering together to build a city, making people yearn for such a place and fear it, both at once.

Not until a Nimrod came, a tower-builder, a Babel-maker who defied the old religion, would the ancient proscription be overcome at last and another city rise up, in another river valley far in time and space from Atlantis, but remembering the old ways that had been memorialized in the stories of warning and, as far as possible, replicating them. We will build a tower so high that it CAN'T be immersed. Didn't Genesis link the flood with Babel in just that way, complete with the nomad's stern disapproval of the city? This was the story that survived in Mesopotamia--the tale of the beginning of city life there, but with clear memories of a more ancient civilization that had been destroyed in a flood.

A more ancient civilization. The golden age. The giants who once walked the earth. Why couldn't all these stories be remembering the first human civilization, the place where the city was invented?

Atlantis, the city of the Mits'iwa plain.
But how could he prove it without using the Tempoview? And how could he get access to one of those machines without first convincing Pastwatch that Atlantis was really in the Red Sea? It was circular, with no way out.
Until he thought: Why do large cities form in the first place? Because there are public works to do that require more than a few people to accomplish them. Kemal wasn't sure what form the public works might take, but surely they would have been something that would change the face of the land obviously enough that the old TruSite I recordings would show it, though it wouldn't be noticeable unless someone was looking for it.
So, putting his degree at risk, Kemal set aside the work he was assigned to do and began poring over the old TruSite I recordings. He concentrated on the last few centuries before the Red Sea flood--there was no reason to suppose that the civilization had lasted very long before it was destroyed. And within a few months he had collected data that was irrefutable. There were no dikes and dams to prevent flooding--that kind of structure would have been large enough that no one would have missed it. Instead there were seemingly random heaps of mud and earth that grew between rainy seasons, especially in the drier years when the rivers were lower than usual. To people looking only for weather patterns, these unstructured, random piles would mean nothing. But to Kemal they were obvious: In the shallowing water, the Atlanteans were dredging channels so that their boats could continue to traffic from place to place. The piles of earth were simply the dumping-places for the muck they dredged from the water. None of the boats showed up on the TruSite I, but now that Kemal knew where to look, he began to catch fleeting glimpses of houses. Every year when the floods came, the houses disappeared, so they were only visible for a moment or two in the Trusite I: flimsy mud-and-reed structures that must have been swept away in every flood season and rebuilt again when the waters receded. But they were there, close by the hillocks that marked the channels. Plato was right again--Atlantis grew up around its canals. But Atlantis was the people and their boats; the buildings were washed away and built again every year.
When Kemal presented his findings to Pastwatch he was not yet twenty years old, but his evidence was impressive enough that Pastwatch immediately turned, not one of the Tempoviews, but the still-newer TruSite II machine to look under the waters of the Red Sea in the Massawa Channel during the hundred years before the Red Sea flood. They found that Kemal was gloriously, spectacularly right. In an era when other humans were still following game animals and gathering berries, the Atlanteans were planting amaranth and ryegrass, melons and beans in the rich wet silt of the receding rivers, and carrying

food in baskets and on reed boats from place to place. The only thing that Kemal had missed was that the reed buildings weren't houses at all. They were silos for the storage of grain, built watertight so that they would float during the flood season. The Atlanteans slept under the open air during the dry season, and in the flood season they slept on their tiny reed boats.

Kemal was brought into Pastwatch and made head of the vast new Atlantis project. This was the seminal culture of all cultures in the old world, and a hundred researchers examined every stage of its development. This methodical work, however, was not for Kemal. As always, it was the grand legend that drew him. He spent every moment he could spare away from the management of the project and devoted it to the search for Noah, for Gilgamesh, for the great man who rode out the flood and whose story lived in memory for thousands of years. There had to be a real original, and Kemal would find him.

The flood season was almost due when Glogmeriss took his journey that would make him into a man named Naog. It was a little early for him, since he was born during the peak of the flood, but everyone in the clan agreed with Twerk that it was better for a manling so well-favored to be early than late, and if he wasn't already up and out of the flood plain before the rains came, then he'd have to wait months before he could safely go. And besides, as Twerk pointed out, why have a big eater like Glogmeriss waiting out the flood season, eating huge handfuls of grain. People listened happily to Twerk's argument, because he was known to be a generous, wise, good-humored man, and everyone expected him to be named clan leader when sweet old ailing Dheub finally died.

Getting above the flood meant walking up the series of slight inclines leading to the last sandy shoulder, where the land began to rise more steeply. Glogmeriss had no intention of climbing any higher than that. His father's journey had taken him over those ridges and on to the great river Nile, but there was no reason for Glogmeriss to clamber through rocks when he could follow the edge of the smooth, grassy savannah. He was high enough to see the vast plain of the Derku lands stretching out before him, and the land was open enough that no cat or pack of dogs could creep up on him unnoticed, let alone some hunter of another tribe.

How far to the Heaving Sea? Far enough that no one of the Derku tribe had ever seen it. But they knew it existed, because when they brought home captives from tribes to the south, they heard tales of such a place, and the farther south the captives came from, the more vivid and convincing the tales became. Still, none of them had ever seen it with their own eyes. So it would be a long journey, Glogmeriss knew that. And all the longer because it would be on

foot, and not on his dragonboat. Not that Derku men were any weaker or slower afoot than men who lived above the flood--on the contrary, they had to be fleet indeed, as well as stealthy, to bring home either captives or meat. So the boys' games included footracing, and while Glogmeriss was not the fastest sprinter, no one could match his long-legged stride for sheer endurance, for covering ground quickly, on and on, hour after hour.

What set the bodies of the Derku people apart from other tribes, what made them recognizable in an instant, was the massive development of their upper bodies from paddling dragonboats hour after hour along the canals or through the floods. It wasn't just paddling, either. It was the heavy armwork of cutting reeds and binding them into great sheaves to be floated home for making boats and ropes and baskets. And in older times, they would also have developed strong arms and backs from dredging the canals that surrounded and connected all the villages of the great Derku city. Slaves did most of that now, but the Derku took great pride in never letting their slaves be stronger than they were. Their shoulders and chests and arms and backs were almost monstrous compared to those of the men and women of other tribes. And since the Derku ate better all year round than people of other tribes, they tended to be taller, too. Many tribes called them giants, and others called them the sons and daughters of the gods, they looked so healthy and strong. And of all the young Derku men, there was none so tall and strong and healthy as Glogmeriss, the boy they called Derkuwed, the man who would be Naog.

So as Glogmeriss loped along the grassy rim of the great plain, he knew he was in little danger from human enemies. Anyone who saw him would think: There is one of the giants, one of the sons of the crocodile god. Hide, for he might be with a party of raiders. Don't let him see you, or he'll take a report back to his people. Perhaps one man in a pack of hunters might say, "He's alone, we can kill him," but the other hunters would jeer at the one who spoke so rashly. "Look, fool, he a javelin in his hands and three tied to his back. Look at his arms, his shoulders--do you think he can't put his javelin through your heart before you got close enough to throw a rock at him? Let him be. Pray for a great cat to find him in the night."

That was Glogmeriss's only real danger. He was too high into the dry lands for crocodiles, and he could run fast enough to climb a tree before any pack of dogs or wolves could bring him down. But there was no tree that would give a moment's pause to one of the big cats. No, if one of THEM took after him, it would be a fight. But Glogmeriss had fought cats before, on guard duty. Not the giants that could knock a man's head off with one blow of its paw, or take his whole belly with one bite of its jaws, but still, they were big

enough, prowling around the outside of the clan lands, and Glogmeriss had fought them with a hand javelin and brought them down alone. He knew something of the way they moved and thought, and he had no doubt that in a contest with one of the big cats, he would at least cause it grave injury before it killed him.

Better not to meet one of them, though. Which meant staying well clear of any of the herds of bison or oxen, antelope or horses that the big cats stalked. Those cats would never have got so big waiting around for lone humans--it was herds they needed, and so it was herds that Glogmeriss did NOT need.

To his annoyance, though, one came to HIM. He had climbed a tree to sleep the night, tying himself to the trunk so he wouldn't fall out in his sleep. He awoke to the sound of nervous lowing and a few higher-pitched, anxious moos. Below him, milling around in the first grey light of the coming dawn, he could make out the shadowy shapes of oxen. He knew at once what had happened. They caught scent of a cat and began to move away in the darkness, shambling in fear and confusion in the near darkness. They had not run because the cat wasn't close enough to cause a panic in the herd. With luck it would be one of the smaller cats, and when it saw that they knew it was there, it would give up and go away.

But the cat had not given up and gone away, or they wouldn't still be so frightened. Soon the herd would have enough light to see the cat that must be stalking them, and then they WOULD run, leaving Glogmeriss behind in a tree. Maybe the cat would go in full pursuit of the running oxen, or maybe it would notice the lone man trapped in a tree and decide to go for the easier, smaller meal.

I wish I were part of this herd, thought Glogmeriss. Then there'd be a chance. I would be one of many, and even if the cat brought one of us down, it might not be me. As a man alone, it's me or the cat. Kill or die. I will fight bravely, but in this light I might not get a clear sight of the cat, might not be able to see in the rippling of its muscles where it will move next. And what if it isn't alone? What if the reason these oxen are so frightened yet unwilling to move is that they know there's more than one cat and they have no idea in which direction safety can be found?

Again he thought, I wish I were part of this herd. And then he thought, Why should I think such a foolish thought twice, unless the god is telling me what to do? Isn't that what this journey is for, to find out if there is a god who will lead me, who will protect me, who will make me great? There's no greatness in having a cat eviscerate you in one bite. Only if you live do you become a man of stories. Like Gweia--if she had mounted the crocodile and it had thrown her off and devoured her, who would ever have heard her name?

There was no time to form a plan, except the plan that formed so

quickly that it might have been the god putting it there. He would ride one of these oxen as Gweia rode the crocodile. It would be easy enough to drop out of the tree onto an ox's back--hadn't he played with the other boys, year after year, jumping from higher and higher branches to land on a dragonboat that was drifting under the tree? An ox was scarcely less predictable than a dragonboat on a current. The only difference was that when he landed on the ox's back, it would not bear him as willingly as a dragonboat. Glogmeriss had to hope that, like Gweia's crocodile frightened of the flood, the ox he landed on would be more frightened of the cat than of the sudden burden on his back.

He tried to pick well among the oxen within reach of the branches of the tree. He didn't want a cow with a calf running alongside--that would be like begging the cats to come after him, since such cows were already the most tempting targets. But he didn't want a bull, either, for he doubted it would have the patience to bear him.

And there was his target, a fullsized cow but with no calf leaning against it, under a fairly sturdy branch. Slowly, methodically, Glogmeriss untied himself from the tree, cinched the bindings of his javelins and his flintsack and his grainsack, and drew his loincloth up to hold his genitals tight against his body, and then crept out along the branch until he was as nearly over the back of the cow he had chosen as possible. The cow was stamping and snorting now--they all were, and in a moment they would bolt, he knew it--but it held still as well as a bobbing dragonboat, and so Glogmeriss took aim and jumped, spreading his legs to embrace the animal's back, but not SO wide that he would slam his crotch against the bony ridge of its spine.

He landed with a grunt and immediately lunged forward to get his arms around the ox's neck, just like gripping the stem of the dragonboat. The beast immediately snorted and bucked, but its bobbing was no worse than the dragonboat ducking under the water at the impact of a boy on its back. Of course, the dragonboat stopped bobbing after a moment, while this ox would no doubt keep trying to be rid of him until he was gone, bucking and turning, bashing its sides into other oxen.

But the other animals were already so nervous that the sudden panic of Glogmeriss's mount was the trigger that set off the stampede. Almost at once the herd mentality took over, and the oxen set out in a headlong rush all in the same direction. Glogmeriss's cow didn't forget the burden on her back, but now she responded to her fear by staying with the herd. It came as a great relief to Glogmeriss when she leapt out and ran among the other oxen, in part because it meant that she was no longer trying to get him off her back, and in part

because she was a good runner and he knew that unless she swerved to the edge of the herd where a cat could pick her off, both she and he would be safe.

Until the panic stopped, of course, and then Glogmeriss would have to figure out a way to get OFF the cow and move away without being gored or trampled to death. Well, one danger at a time. And as they ran, he couldn't help but feel the sensations of the moment: The prickly hair of the ox's back against his belly and legs, the way her muscles rippled between his legs and within the embrace of his arms, and above all the sheer exhilaration of moving through the air at such a speed. Has any man ever moved as fast over the ground as I am moving now? he wondered. No dragonboat has ever found a current so swift.

It seemed that they ran for hours and hours, though when they finally came to a stop the sun was still only a palm's height above the mountains far across the plain to the east. As the running slowed to a jolting jog, and then to a walk, Glogmeriss kept waiting for his mount to remember that he was on her back and to start trying to get him off. But if she remembered, she must have decided she didn't mind, because when she finally came to a stop, still in the midst of the herd, she simply dropped her head and began to graze, making no effort to get Glogmeriss off her back.

She was so calm--or perhaps like the others was simply so exhausted--that Glogmeriss decided that as long as he moved slowly and calmly he might be able to walk on out of the herd, or at least climb a tree and wait for them to move on. He knew from the roaring and screaming sounds he had heard near the beginning of the stampede that the cats--more than one--had found their meal, so the survivors were safe enough for now.

Glogmeriss carefully let one leg slide down until he touched the ground. Then, smoothly as possible, he slipped off the cow's back until he was crouched beside her. She turned her head slightly, chewing a mouthful of grass. Her great brown eye regarded him calmly.

"Thank you for carrying me," said Glogmeriss softly.

She moved her head away, as if to deny that she had done anything special for him.

"You carried me like a dragonboat through the flood," he said, and he realized that this was exactly right, for hadn't the stampede of oxen been as dangerous and powerful as any flood of water? And she had borne him up, smooth and safe, carrying him safely to the far shore. "The best of dragonboats."

She lowed softly, and for a moment Glogmeriss began to think of her as being somehow the embodiment of the god--though it could not be the crocodile god that took this form, could it? But all thoughts of the animal's godhood were shattered when it started to urinate. The

thick stream of ropey piss splashed into the grass not a span away from Glogmeriss's shoulder, and as the urine spattered him he could not help but jump away. Other nearby oxen mooed complainingly about his sudden movement, but his own cow seemed not to notice. The urine stank hotly, and Glogmeriss was annoyed that the stink would stay with him for days, probably.

Then he realized that no COW could put a stream of urine between her forelegs. This animal was a bull after all. Yet it was scarcely larger than the normal cow, not bull-like at all. Squatting down, he looked closely, and realized that the animal had lost its testicles somehow. Was it a freak, born without them? No, there was a scar, a ragged sign of old injury. While still a calf, this animal had had its bullhood torn away. Then it grew to adulthood, neither cow nor bull. What purpose was there in life for such a creature as that? And yet if it had not lived, it could not have carried him through the stampede. A cow would have had a calf to slow it down; a bull would have flung him off easily. The god had prepared this creature to save him. It was not itself a god, of course, for such an imperfect animal could hardly be divine. But it was a god's tool.

"Thank you," said Glogmeriss, to whatever god it was. "I hope to know you and serve you," he said. Whoever the god was must have known him for a long time, must have planned this moment for years. There was a plan, a destiny for him. Glogmeriss felt himself thrill inside with the certainty of this.

I could turn back now, he thought, and I would have had the greatest manhood journey of anyone in the tribe for generations. They would regard me as a holy man, when they learned that a god had prepared such a beast as this to be my dragonboat on dry land. No one would say I was unworthy to be Naog, and no more Glogmeriss.

But even as he thought this, Glogmeriss knew that it would be wrong to go back. The god had prepared this animal, not to make his manhood journey easy and short, but to make his long journey possible. Hadn't the ox carried him southeast, the direction he was already heading? Hadn't it brought him right along the very shelf of smooth grassland that he had already been running on? No, the god meant to speed him on his way, not to end his journey. When he came back, the story of the unmanned ox that carried him like a boat would be merely the first part of his story. They would laugh when he told them about the beast peeing on him. They would nod and murmur in awe as he told them that he realized that the god was helping him to go on, that the god had chosen him years before in order to prepare the calf that would be his mount. Yet this would all be the opening, leading to the main point of the story, the climax. And what that climax would be, what he would accomplish that would let him take on his manly name, Glogmeriss could hardly bear to wait to find out.

Unless, of course, the god was preparing him to be a sacrifice. But the god could have killed him at any time. It could have killed him when he was born, dropping him into the water as everyone said his father had feared might happen. It could have let him die there at the tree, taken by a cat or trampled under the feet of the oxen. No, the god was keeping him alive for a purpose, for a great task. His triumph lay ahead, and whatever it was, it would be greater than his ride on the back of an ox.

The rains came the next day, but Glogmeriss pressed on. The rain made it hard to see far ahead, but most of the animals stopped moving in the rain and so there wasn't as much danger to look out for. Sometimes the rain came down so thick and hard that Glogmeriss could hardly see a dozen steps ahead. But he ran on, unhindered. The shelf of land that he ran along was perfectly flat, neither uphill nor downhill, as level as water, and so he could lope along without wearying. Even when the thunder roared in the sky and lightning seemed to flash all around him, Glogmeriss did not stop, for he knew that the god that watched over him was powerful indeed. He had nothing to fear. And since he passed two burning trees, he knew that lightning could have struck him at any time, and yet did not, and so it was a second sign that a great god was with him.

During the rains he cross many swollen streams, just by walking. Only once did he have to cross a river that was far too wide and deep and swift in flood for him to cross. But he plunged right in, for the god was with him. Almost at once he was swept off his feet, but he swam strongly across the current. Yet even a strong Derku man cannot swim forever, and it began to seem to Glogmeriss that he would never reach the other side, but rather would be swept down to the salt sea, where one day his body would wash to shore near a party of Derku raiders who would recognize from the size of his body that it was him. So, this is what happened to Twerk's son Glogmeriss. The flood took him after all.

Then he bumped against a log that was also floating on the current, and took hold of it, and rolled up onto the top of it like a dragonboat. Now he could use all his strength for paddling, and soon he was across the current. He drew the log from the water and embraced it like a brother, lying beside it, holding it in the wet grass until the rising water began to lick at his feet again. Then he dragged the log with him to higher ground and placed it up in the notch of a tree where no flood would dislodge it. One does not abandon a brother to the flood.

Three times the god has saved me, he thought as he climbed back up to the level shelf that was his path. From the tooth of the cat, from the fire of heaven, from the water of the flood. Each time a

tree was part of it: The tree around which the herd of oxen gathered and from which I dropped onto the ox's back; the trees that died in flames from taking to themselves the bolts of lightning meant for me; and finally this log of a fallen tree that died in its home far up in the mountains in order to be my brother in the water of the flood. Is it a god of trees, then, that leads me on? But how can a god of trees be more powerful than the god of lightning or the god of the floods or even the god of sharp-toothed cats? No, trees are simply tools the god has used. The god flings trees about as easily as I fling a javelin.

Gradually, over many days, the rains eased a bit, falling in steady showers instead of sheets. Off to his left, he could see that the plain was rising upcloser and closer to the smooth shelf along which he ran. On the first clear morning he saw that there was no more distant shining on the still waters of the Salty Sea--the plain was now higher than the level of that water; he had behind the only sea that the Derku people had ever seen. The Heaving Sea lay yet ahead, and so he ran on.

The plain was quite high, but he was still far enough above it that he could see the shining when it came again on a clear morning. He had left one sea behind, and now, with the ground much higher, there was another sea. Could this be it, the Heaving Sea?

He left the shelf and headed across the savannah toward the water. He did not reach it that day, but on the next afternoon he stood on the shore and knew that this was not the place he had been looking for. The water was far smaller than the Salty Sea, smaller even than the Sweetwater Sea up in the mountains from which the Selud River flowed. And yet when he dipped his finger into the water and tasted it, it WAS a little salty. Almost sweet, but salty nonetheless. Not good for drinking. That was obvious from the lack of animal tracks around the water. It must usually be saltier than this, thought Glogmeriss. It must have been freshened somewhat by the rains.

Instead of returning to his path along the shelf by the route he had followed to get to this small sea, Glogmeriss struck out due south. He could see the shelf in the distance, and could see that by running south he would rejoin the level path a good way farther along.

As he crossed a small stream, he saw animal prints again, and among them the prints of human feet. Many feet, and they were fresher than any of the animal prints. So fresh, in fact, that for all Glogmeriss knew they could be watching him right now. If he stumbled on them suddenly, they might panic, seeing a man as large as he was. And in this place what would they know of the Derku people? No raiders had ever come this far in search of captives, he was sure. That meant that they wouldn't necessarily hate him--but they wouldn't fear retribution from his tribe, either. No, the best course was for him

to turn back and avoid them.
But a god was protecting him, and besides, he had been without the sound of a human voice for so many days. If he did not carry any of his javelins, but left them all slung on his back, they would know he meant no harm and they would not fear him. So there at the stream, he bent over, slipped off the rope holding his javelins, and untied them to bind them all together.
As he was working, he heard a sound and knew without looking that he had been found. Perhaps they HAD been watching him all along. His first thought was to pick up his javelins and prepare for battle.
But he did not know how many they were, or whether they were all around him, and in the dense brush near the river he might be surrounded by so many that they could overwhelm him easily, even if he killed one or two. For a moment he thought, The god protects me, I could kill them all. But then he rejected that idea. He had killed nothing on this journey, not even for meat, eating only the grain he carried with him and such berries and fruits and roots and greens and mushrooms as he found along the way. Should he begin now, killing when he knew nothing about these people? Perhaps meeting them was what the god had brought him here to do.
So a slowly, carefully finished binding the javelins and then slung them up onto his shoulder, being careful never to hold the javelins in a way that might make his watcher or watchers think that he was making them ready for battle. Then, his hands empty and his weapons bound to his back, he splashed through the stream and followed the many footprints on the far side.
He could hear feet padding along behind him--more than one person, too, from the sound. They might be coming up behind him to kill him, but it didn't sound as if they were trying to overtake him, or to be stealthy, either. They must know that he could hear them. But perhaps they thought he was very stupid. He had to show them that he did not turn to fight them because he did not want to fight, and not because he was stupid or afraid.
To show them he was not afraid, he began to sing the song of the dog who danced with a man, which was funny and had a jaunty tune. And to show them he knew they were there, he bent over as he walked, scooped up a handful of damp soil, and flung it lightly over his shoulder.
The sound of sputtering outrage told him that the god had guided his lump of mud right to its target. He stopped and turned to find four men following him, one of whom was brushing dirt out of his face, cursing loudly. The others looked uncertain whether to be angry at Glogmeriss for flinging dirt at them or afraid of him because he was so large and strange and unafraid.
Glogmeriss didn't want them to be either afraid or angry. So he let a slow smile come to his face, not a smile of derision, but rather a

friendly smile that said, I mean no harm. To reinforce this idea, he held his hands out wide, palms facing the strangers.

They understood him, and perhaps because of his smile began to see the humor in the situation. They smiled, too, and then, because the one who was hit with dirt was still complaining and trying to get it out of his eyes, they began to laugh at him. Glogmeriss laughed with them, but then walked slowly toward his victim and, carefully letting them all see what he was doing, took his waterbag from his waist and untied it a little, showing them that water dropped from it. They uttered something in an ugly-sounding language and the one with dirt in his eyes stopped, leaned his head back, and stoically allowed Glogmeriss to bathe his eyes with water.

When at last, dripping and chagrined, the man could see again, Glogmeriss flung an arm across his shoulder like a comrade, and then reached out for the man who seemed to be the leader. After a moment's hesitation, the man allowed Glogmeriss the easy embrace, and together they walked toward the main body of the tribe, the other two walking as closely as possible, behind and ahead, talking to Glogmeriss even though he made it plain that he did not understand.

When they reached the others they were busy building a cookfire. All who could, left their tasks and came to gawk at the giant stranger. While the men who had found him recounted the tale, others came and touched Glogmeriss, especially his strong arms and chest, and his loincloth as well, since none of the men wore any kind of clothing. Glogmeriss viewed this with disgust. It was one thing for little boys to run around naked, but he knew that men should keep their privates covered so they wouldn't get dirty. What woman would let her husband couple with her, if he let any kind of filth get on his javelin?

Of course, these men were all so ugly that no woman would want them anyway, and the women were so ugly that the only men who would want them would be these. Perhaps ugly people don't care about keeping themselves clean, thought Glogmeriss. But the women wore naprons made of woven grass, which looked softer than the beaten reeds that the Derku wove. So it wasn't that these people didn't know how to make cloth, or that the idea of wearing clothing had never occurred to them. The men were simply filthy and stupid, Glogmeriss decided. And the women, while not as filthy, must be just as stupid or they wouldn't let the men come near them.

Glogmeriss tried to explain to them that he was looking for the Heaving Sea, and ask them where it was. But they couldn't understand any of the gestures and handsigns he tried, and his best efforts merely left them laughing to the point of helplessness. He gave up

and made as if to leave, which immediately brought protests and an obvious invitation to dinner.

It was a welcome thought, and their chief seemed quite anxious for him to stay. A meal would only make him stronger for the rest of his journey.

He stayed for the meal, which was strange but good. And then, wooed by more pleas from the chief and many others, he agreed to sleep the night with them, though he halfway feared that in his sleep they planned to kill him or at least rob him. In the event, it turned out that they DID have plans for him, but it had nothing to do with killing. By morning the chief's prettiest daughter was Glogmeriss's bride, and even though she was as ugly as any of the others, she had done a good enough job of initiating him into the pleasures of men and women that he could overlook her thin lips and beakish nose.

This was not supposed to happen on a manhood journey. He was expected to come home and marry one of the pretty girls from one of the other clans of the Derku people. Many a father had already been negotiating with Twerk or old Dheub with an eye toward getting Glogmeriss as a son-in-law. But what harm would it do if Glogmeriss had a bride for a few days with these people, and then slipped away and went home? No one among the Derku would ever meet any of these ugly people, and even if they did, who would care? You could do what you wanted with strangers. It wasn't as if they were people, like the Derku.

But the days came and went, and Glogmeriss could not bring himself to leave. He was still enjoying his nights with Zawada--as near as he could come to pronouncing her name, which had a strange click in the middle of it. And as he began to learn to understand something of their language, he harbored a hope that they could tell him about the Heaving Sea and, in the long run, save him time.

Days became weeks, and weeks became months, and Zawada's blood-days didn't come and so they knew she was pregnant, and then Glogmeriss didn't want to leave, because he had to see the child he had put into her. So he stayed, and learned to help with the work of this tribe. They found his size and prodigious strength very helpful, and Zawada was comically boastful about her husband's prowess--marrying him had brought her great prestige, even more than being the chief's daughter. And it gradually came to Glogmeriss's mind that if he stayed he would probably be chief of these people himself someday. At times when he thought of that, he felt a strange sadness, for what did it mean to be chief of these miserable ugly people, compared to the honor of being the most ordinary of the Derku people? How could being chief of these grub-eaters and gatherers compare to eating the common bread of the Derku and riding on a dragonboat through the flood or on raids? He enjoyed Zawada, he enjoyed the people of this tribe, but they were not his people, and

he knew that he would leave. Eventually.
Zawada's belly was beginning to swell when the tribe suddenly gathered their tools and baskets and formed up to begin another trek. They didn't move back north, however, the direction they had come from when Glogmeriss found them. Rather their migration was due south, and soon, to his surprise, he found that they were hiking along the very shelf of land that had been his path in coming to this place.
It occurred to him that perhaps the god had spoken to the chief in the night, warning him to get Glogmeriss back on his abandoned journey. But no, the chief denied any dream. Rather he pointed to the sky and said it was time to go get--something. A word Glogmeriss had never heard before. But it was clearly some kind of food, because the adults nearby began laughing with anticipatory delight and pantomiming eating copious amounts of--something.
Off to the northeast, they passed along the shores of another small sea. Glogmeriss asked if the water was sweet and if it had fish in it, but Zawada told him, sadly, that the sea was spoiled. "It used to be good," she said. "The people drank from it and swam in it and trapped fish in it, but it got poisoned."
"How?" asked Glogmeriss.
"The god vomited into it."
"What god did that?"
"The great god," she said, looking mysterious and amused.
"How do you know he did?" asked Glogmeriss.
"We saw," she said. "There was a terrible storm, with winds so strong they tore babies from their mothers' arms and carried them away and they were never seen again. My own mother and father held me between them and I wasn't carried off--I was scarcely more than a baby then, and I remember how scared I was, to have my parents crushing me between them while the wind screamed through the trees."

"But a rainstorm would sweeten the water," said Glogmeriss. "Not make it salty."
"I told you," said Zawada. "The god vomited into it."
"But if you don't mean the rain, then what do you mean?"
To which her only answer was a mysterious smile and a giggle.
"You'll see," she said.
And in the end, he did. Two days after leaving this second small sea behind, they rounded a bend and some of the men began to shinny up trees, looking off to the east as if they knew exactly what they'd see. "There it is!" they cried. "We can see it!"

Glogmeriss lost no time in climbing up after them, but it took a while for him to know what it was they had seen. It wasn't till he

climbed another tree the next morning, when they were closer and when the sun was shining in the east, that he realized that the vast plain opening out before them to the east wasn't a plain at all. It was water, shimmering strangely in the sunlight of morning. More water than Glogmeriss had ever imagined. And the reason the light shimmered that way was because the water was moving. It was the Heaving Sea.

He came down from tree in awe, only to find the whole tribe watching him. When they saw his face, they burst into hysterical laughter, including even Zawada. Only now did it occur to him that they had understood him perfectly well on his first day with them, when he described the Heaving Sea. They had known where he was headed, but they hadn't told him.

"There's the joke back on you!" cried the man in whose face Glogmeriss had thrown dirt on that first day. And now it seemed like perfect justice to Glogmeriss. He had played a joke, and they had played one back, an elaborate jest that required even his wife to keep the secret of the Heaving Sea from him.

Zawada's father, the chief, now explained that it was more than a joke. "Waiting to show you the Heaving Sea meant that you would stay and marry Zawada and give her giant babies. A dozen giants like you!"

Zawada grinned cheerfully. "If they don't kill me coming out, it'll be fine to have sons like yours will be!"

Next day's journey took them far enough that they didn't have to climb trees to see the Heaving Sea, and it was larger than Glogmeriss had ever imagined. He couldn't see the end of it. And it moved all the time. There were more surprises when they got to the shore that night, however. For the sea was noisy, a great roaring, and it kept throwing itself at the shore and then retreating, heaving up and down. Yet the children were fearless--they ran right into the water and let the waves chase them to shore. The men and women soon joined them, for a little while, and Glogmeriss himself finally worked up the courage to let the water touch him, let the waves chase him. He tasted the water, and while it was saltier than the small seas to the northwest, it was nowhere near as salty as the Salt Sea.

"This is the god that poisoned the little seas," Zawad explained to him. "This is the god that vomited into them."

But Glogmeriss looked at how far the waves came onto the shore and laughed at her. "How could these heavings of the sea reach all the way to those small seas? It took days to get here from there."

She grimaced at him. "What do you know, giant man? These waves are not the reason why this is called the Heaving Sea by those who call it that. These are like little butterfly flutters compared to the true heaving of the sea."

Glogmeriss didn't understand until later in the day, as he realized that the waves weren't reaching as high as they had earlier. The beach sand was wet much higher up the shore than the waves could get to now. Zawada was delighted to explain the tides to him, how the sea heaved upward and downward, twice a day or so. "The sea is calling to the moon," she said, but could not explain what that meant, except that the tides were linked to the passages of the moon rather than the passages of the sun.

As the tide ebbed, the tribe stopped playing and ran out onto the sand. With digging stones they began scooping madly at the sand. Now and then one of them would shout in triumph and hold up some ugly, stony, dripping object for admiration before dropping it into a basket. Glogmeriss examined them and knew at once that these things could not be stones--they were too regular, too symmetrical. It wasn't till one of the men showed him the knack of prying them open by hammering on a sharp wedgestone that he really understood, for inside the hard stony surface there was a soft, pliable animal that could draw its shell closed around it.

"That's how it lives under the water," explained the man. "It's watertight as a mud-covered basket, only all the way around. Tight all the way around. So it keeps the water out!"

Like the perfect seedboat, thought Glogmeriss. Only no boat of reeds could ever be made THAT watertight, not so it could be plunged underwater and stay dry inside.

That night they built a fire and roasted the clams and mussels and oysters on the ends of sticks. They were tough and rubbery and they tasted salty--but Glogmeriss soon discovered that the very saltiness was the reason this was such a treat, that and the juices they released when you first chewed on them. Zawada laughed at him for chewing his first bite so long. "Cut it off in smaller bits," she said, "and then chew it till it stops tasting good and then swallow it whole." The first time he tried, it took a bit of doing to swallow it without gagging, but he soon got used to it and it WAS delicious.

"Don't drink so much of your water," said Zawada.

"I'm thirsty," said Glogmeriss.

"Of course you are," she said. "But when we run out of fresh water, we have to leave. There's nothing to drink in this place. So drink only a little at a time, so we can stay another day."

The next morning he helped with the clam-digging, and his powerful shoulders and arms allowed him to excel at this task, just as with so many others. But he didn't have the appetite for roasting them, and wandered off alone while the others feasted on the shore. They did their digging in a narrow inlet of the sea, where a long thin finger of water surged inward at high tide and then retreated almost completely at low tide. The finger of the sea seemed to point

straight toward the land of the Derku, and it made Glogmeriss think of home.

Why did I come here? Why did the god go to so much trouble to bring me? Why was I saved from the cats and the lightning and the flood? Was it just to see this great water and taste the salty meat of the clams? These are marvels, it's true, but no greater than the marvel of the castrated bull-ox that I rode, or the lightning fires, or the log that was my brother in the flood. Why would it please the god to bring me here?

He heard footsteps and knew at once that it was Zawada. He did not look up. Soon he felt her arms come around him from behind, her swelling breasts pressed against his back.

"Why do you look toward your home?" she asked softly. "Haven't I made you happy?"

"You've made me happy," he said.

"But you look sad."

He nodded.

"The gods trouble you," she said. "I know that look on your face. You never speak of it, but I know at such times you are thinking of the god who brought you here and wondering if she loved you or hated you."

He laughed aloud. "Do you see inside my skin, Zawada?"

"Not your skin," she said. "But I could see inside your loincloth when you first arrived, which is why I told my father to let me be the one to marry you. I had to beat up my sister before she would let me be the one to share your sleeping mat that night. She has never forgiven me. But I wanted your babies."

Glogmeriss grunted. He had known about the sister's jealousy, but since she was ugly and he had never slept with her, her jealousy was never important to him.

"Maybe the god brought you here to see where she vomited."

That again.

"It was in a terrible storm."

"You told me about the storm," said Glogmeriss, not wanting to hear it all again.

"When the storms are strong, the sea rises higher than usual. It heaved its way far up this channel. Much farther than this tongue of the sea reaches now. It flowed so far that it reached the first of the small seas and made it flow over and then it reached the second one and that, too, flowed over. But then the storm ceased and the water flowed back to where it was before, only so much salt water had gone into the small seas that they were poisoned."

"So long ago, and yet the salt remains?"

"Oh, I think the sea has vomited into them a couple more times

sincethen. Never as strongly as that first time, though. You can see this channel--so much of the seawater flowed through here that it cut a channel in the sand. This finger of the sea is all that's left of it, but you can see the banks of it--like a dried-up river, you see? That was cut then, the ground used to be at the level of the rest of the valley there. The sea still reaches into that new channel, as if it remembered. Before, the shore used to be clear out there, where the waves are high. It's much better for clam-digging now, though, because this whole channel gets filled with clams and we can get them easily."

Glogmeriss felt something stirring inside him. Something in what she had just said was very, very important, but he didn't know what it was.

He cast his gaze off to the left, to the shelf of land that he had walked along all the way on his manhood journey, that this tribe had followed in coming here. The absolutely level path.

Absolutely level. And yet the path was not more than three or four man-heights above the level of the Heaving Sea, while back in the lands of the Derku, the shelf was so far above the level of the Salt Sea that it felt as though you were looking down from a mountain. The whole plain was enormously wide, and yet it went so deep before reaching the water of the Salt Sea that you could see for miles and miles, all the way across. It was deep, that plain, a valley, really. A deep gouge cut into the earth. And if this shelf of land was truly level, the Heaving Sea was far, far higher.

He thought of the floods. Thought of the powerful current of the flooding river that had snagged him and swept him downward. And then he thought of a storm that lifted the water of the Heaving Sea and sent it crashing along this valley floor, cutting a new channel until it reached those smaller seas, filling them with saltwater, causing THEM to flood and spill over. Spill over where? Where did their water flow? He already knew--they emptied down into the Salt Sea. Down and down and down.

It will happen again, thought Glogmeriss. There will be another storm, and this time the channel will be cut deeper, and when the storm subsides the water will still flow, because now the channel will be below the level of the Heaving Sea at high tide. And at each high tide, more water will flow and the channel will get deeper and deeper, till it's deep enough that even at low tide the water will still flow through it, cutting the channel more and more, and the water will come faster and faster, and then the Heaving Sea will spill over into the great valley, faster and faster and faster.

All this water then will spill out of the Heaving Sea and go down into the plain until the two seas are the same level. And once that happens, it will never go back.

The lands of the Derku are far below the level of the new sea, even

if it's only half as high as the waters of the Heaving Sea are now. Our city will be covered. The whole land. And it won't be a trickle. It will be a great bursting of water, a huge wave of water, like the first gush of the floodwater down the Selud River from the Sweetwater Sea. Just like that, only the Heaving Sea is far larger than the Sweetwater Sea, and its water is angry and poisonous.
"Yes," said Glogmeriss. "I see what you brought me here to show me."

"Don't be silly," said Zawada. "I brought you here to have you eat clams!"
"I wasn't talking to you," said Glogmeriss. He stood up and left her, walking down the finger of the sea, where the tide was rising again, bringing the water lunging back up the channel, pointing like a javelin toward the heart of the Derku people. Zawada followed behind him. He didn't mind.
Glogmeriss reached the waves of the rising tide and plunged in. He knelt down in the water and let a wave crash over him. The force of the water toppled him, twisted him until he couldn't tell which was was up and he thought he would drown under the water. But then the wave retreated again,leaving him in the shallow water on the shore. He crawled back out stayed there, the taste of salt on his lips, gasping for air, and then cried out, "Why are you doing this! Why are you doing this to my people!"
Zawada stood watching him, and others of the tribe came to join her, to find out what the strange giant man was doing in the sea.
Angry, thought Glogmeriss. The god is angry with my people. And I have been brought here to see just what terrible punishment the god has prepared for them. "Why?" he cried again. "Why not just break through this channel and send the flood and bury the Derku people in poisonous water? Why must I be shown this first? So I can save myself by staying high out of the flood's way? Why should I be saved alive, and all my family, all my friends be destroyed? What is their crime that I am not also guilty of? If you brought me here to save me, then you failed, God, because I refuse to stay, I will go back to my people and warn them all, I'll tell them what you're planning. You can't save me alone. When the flood comes I'll be right there with the rest of them. So to save me, you must save them all. If you don't like THAT, then you should have drowned me just now when you had the chance!"
Glogmeriss rose dripping from the beach and began to walk, past the people, up toward the shelf of land that made the level highway back home to the Derku people. The tribe understood at once that he was leaving, and they began calling out to him, begging him to stay.
"I can't," he said. "Don't try to stop me. Even the god can't stop me."
They didn't try to stop him, not by force. But the chief ran after

him, walked beside him--ran beside him, really, for that was the only way he could keep up with Glogmeriss's long-legged stride.
"Friend, Son," said the chief. "Don't you know that you will be king of these people after me?"
"A people should have a king who is one of their own."
"But you ARE one of us now," said the chief. "The mightiest of us. You will make us a great people! The god has chosen you, do you think we can't see that? This is why the god brought you here, to lead us and make us great!"
"No," said Glogmeriss. "I'm a man of the Derku people."
"Where are they? Far from here. And there is my daughter with your first child in her womb. What do they have in Derku lands that can compare to that?"
"They have the womb where I was formed," said Glogmeriss. "They have the man who put me there. They have the others who came from that woman and that man. They are my people."
"Then go back, but not today! Wait till you see your child born. Decide then!"
Glogmeriss stopped so abruptly that the chief almost fell over, trying to stop running and stay with him. "Listen to me, father of my wife. If you were up in the mountain hunting, and you looked down and saw a dozen huge cats heading toward the place where your people were living, would say to yourself, Oh, I suppose the god brought me here to save me? Or would you run down the mountain and warn them, and do all you could to fight off the cats and save your people?"
"What is this story?" asked the chief. "There are no cats. You've seen no cats."
"I've seen the god heaving in his anger," said Glogmeriss. "I've seen how he looms over my people, ready to destroy them all. A flood that will tear their flimsy reed boats to pieces. A flood that will come in a single great wave and then will never go away. Do you think I shouldn't warn my mother and father, my brothers and sisters, the friends of my childhood?"

"I think you have new brothers and sisters, a new father and mother. The god isn't angry with US. The god isn't angry with you. We should stay together. Don't you WANT to stay with us and live and rule over us? You can be our king now, today. You can be king over me, I give you my place!"
"Keep your place," said Glogmeriss. "Yes, a part of me wants to stay. A part of me is afraid. But that is the part of me that is Glogmeriss, and still a boy. If I don't go home and warn my people and show them how to save themselves from the god, then I will always be a boy, nothing but a boy, call me a king if you want, but I will be a boy-king, a coward, a child until the day I die. So I

tell you now, it is the child who dies in this place, not the man. It was the child Glogmeriss who married Zawada. Tell her that a strange man named Naog killed her husband. Let her marry someone else, someone of her own tribe, and never think of Glogmeriss again." Glogmeriss kissed his father- in-law and embraced him. Then he turned away, and with his first step along the path leading back to the Derku people, he knew that he was truly Naog now, the man who would save the Derku people from the fury of the god.

Kemal watched the lone man of the Engu clan as he walked away from the beach, as he conversed with his father-in-law, as he turned his face again away from the Gulf of Aden, toward the land of the doomed crocodile- worshippers whose god was no match for the forces about to be unleashed on them. This was the one, Kemal knew, for he had seen the wooden boat--more of a watertight cabin on a raft, actually, with none of this nonsense about taking animals two by two. This was the man of legends, but seeing his face, hearing his voice, Kemal was no closer to understanding him than he had been before. What can we see, using the TruSite II? Only what is visible. We may be able to range through time, to see the most intimate, the most terrible, the most horrifying, the most inspiring moments of human history, but we only see them, we only hear them, we are witnesses but we know nothing of the thing that matters most: motive.

Why didn't you stay with your new tribe, Naog? They heeded your warning, and camped always on higher ground during the monsoon season. They lived through the flood, all of them. And when you went home and no one listened to your warnings, why did you stay? What was it that made you remain among them, enduring their ridicule as you built your watertight seedboat? You could have left at any time--there were others who cut themselves loose from their birth tribe and wandered through the world until they found a new home. The Nile was waiting for you. The grasslands of Arabia. They were already there, calling to you, even as your own homeland became poisonous to you. Yet you remained among the Engu, and by doing so, you not only gave the world an unforgettable story, you also changed the course of history. What kind of being is it who can change the course of history, just because he follows his own unbending will?

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It was on his third morning that Naog realized that he was not alone on his return journey. He awoke in his tree because he heard shuffling footsteps through the grass nearby. Or perhaps it was something else that woke him--some unhearable yearning that he nevertheless heard. He looked, and saw in the faint light of the thinnest crescent moon that a lone baboon was shambling along, lazy, staggering. No doubt an old male, thought Naog, who will soon be meat for some predator.

Then his eyes adjusted and he realized that this lone baboon was not as close as he had thought, that in fact it was much bigger, much TALLER than he had thought. It was not male, either, but female, and far from being a baboon, it was a human, a pregnant woman, and he knew her now and shuddered at his own thought of her becoming the meal for some cat, some crocodile, some pack of dogs.
Silently he unfastened himself from his sleeping tree and dropped to the ground. In moments he was beside her.
"Zawada," he said.
She didn't turn to look at him.
"Zawada, what are you doing?"
Now she stopped. "Walking," she said.
"You're asleep," he said. "You're in a dream."
"No, YOU'RE asleep," she said, giggling madly in her weariness.
"Why have you come? I left you."
"I know," she said.
"I'm returning to my own people. You have to stay with yours." But he knew even as he said it that she could not go back there, not unless he went with her. Physically she was unable to go on by herself--clearly she had eaten nothing and slept little in three days. Why she had not died already, taken by some beast, he could not guess. But if she was to return to her people, he would have to take her, and he did not want to go back there. It made him very angry, and so his voice burned when he spoke to her.
"I wanted to," she said. "I wanted to weep for a year and then make an image of you out of sticks and burn it."
"You should have," he said.
"Your son wouldn't let me." As she spoke, she touched her belly.
"Son? Has some god told you who he is?"
"He came to me himself in a dream, and he said, 'Don't let my father go without me.' So I brought him to you."
"I don't want him, son OR daughter." But he knew even as he said it that it wasn't true.
She didn't know it, though. Her eyes welled with tears and she sank down into the grass. "Good, then," she said. "Go on with your journey. I'm sorry the god led me near you, so you had to be bothered." She sank back in the grass. Seeing the faint gleam of light reflected from her skin awoke feelings that Naog was now ashamed of, memories of how she had taught him the easing of a man's passion.
"I can't walk off and leave you."
"You already did," she said. "So do it again. I need to sleep now."
"You'll be torn by animals and eaten."
"Let them," she said. "You never chose me, Derku man, I chose YOU. I invited this baby into my body. Now if we die here in the grass, what is that to you? All you care about is not having to watch. So

don't watch. Go. The sky is getting light. Run on ahead. If we die, we die. We're nothing to you anyway."
Her words made him ashamed. "I left you knowing you and the baby would be safe, at home. Now you're here and you aren't safe, and I can't walk away from you."
"So run," she said. "I was your wife, and this was your son, but in your heart we're already dead anyway."
"I didn't bring you because you'd have to learn the Derku language. It's much harder than your language."
"I would have had to learn it anyway, you fool," she said. "The baby inside me is a Derku man like you. How would I get him to understand me, if I didn't learn Derku talk?"
Naog wanted to laugh aloud at her hopeless ignorance. But then, how would she know? Naog had seen the children of captives and knew that in Derku lands they grew up speaking the Derku language, even when both parents were from another tribe that had not one word of Derku language in it. But Zawada had never seen the babies of strangers; her tribe captured no one, went on no raids, but rather lived at peace, moving from place to place, gathering whatever the earth or the sea had to offer them. How could she match even a small part of the great knowledge of the Derku, who brought the whole world within their city?

He wanted to laugh, but he did not laugh. Instead he watched over her as she slept, as the day waxed and waned. As the sun rose he carried her to the tree to sleep in the shade. Keeping his eye open for animals prowling near her, he gathered such leaves and seeds and roots as the ground offered the traveler at this time of year. Twice he came back and found her breath rasping and noisy; then he made her wake enough to drink a little of his water, but she was soon asleep, water glistening on her chin.
At last in the late afternoon, with the air was hot and still, he squatted down in the grass beside her and woke her for good, showing her the food. She ate ravenously, and when she was done, she embraced him and called him the best of the gods because he didn't leave her to die after all.
"I'm not a god," he said, baffled.
"All my people know you are a god, from a land of gods. So large, so powerful, so good. You came us so you could have a human baby. But this baby is only half human. How will he ever be happy, living among US, never knowing the gods?"
"You've seen the Heaving Sea, and you call ME a god?"
"Take me with you to the land of the Derku. Let me give birth to your baby there. I will leave it with your mother and your sisters, and I will go home. I know I don't belong among the gods, but my

baby does."
In his heart, Naog wanted to say yes, you'll stay only till the baby is born, and then you'll go home. But he remembered her patience as he learned the language of her people. He remembered the sweet language of the night, and the way he had to laugh at how she tried to act like a grown woman when she was only a child, and yet she couldn't act like a child because she was, after all, now a woman. Because of me she is a woman, thought Naog, and because of her and her people I will come home a man. Do I tell her she must go away, even though I know that the others will think she's ugly as I thought she was ugly?
And she IS ugly, thought Naog. Our son, if he IS a son, will be ugly like her people, too. I will be ashamed of him. I will be ashamed of her.
Is a man ashamed of his firstborn son?
"Come home with me to the land of the Derku," said Naog. "We will tell them together about the Heaving Sea, and how one day soon it will leap over the low walls of sand and pour into this great plain in a flood that will cover the Derku lands forever. There will be a great migration. We will move, all of us, to the land my father found. The crocodiles live there also, along the banks of the Nile."

"Then you will truly be the greatest among the gods," she said, and the worship in her eyes made him proud and ill-at-ease, both at once. Yet how could he deny that the Derku were gods? Compared to her poor tribe, they would seem so. Thousands of people living in the midst of their own canals; the great fields of planted grain stretching far in every direction; the great wall of earth surrounding the Great Derku; the seedboats scattered like strange soft boulders; the children riding their dragonboats through the canals; a land of miracles to her. Where else in all the world had so many people learned to live together, making great wealth where once there had been only savannah and floodplain?
We live like gods, compared to other people. We come like gods out of nowhere, to carry off captives the way death carries people off. Perhaps that is what the life after death is like--the REAL gods using us to dredge their canals. Perhaps that is what all of human life is for, to create slaves for the gods. And what if the gods themselves are also raided by some greater beings yet, carrying THEM off to raise grain in some unimaginable garden? Is there no end to the capturing?
There are many strange and ugly captives in Derku, thought Naog. Who will doubt me if I say that this woman is my captive? She doesn't speak the language, and soon enough she would be used to the life. I would be kind to her, and would treat her son well--I would hardly be the first man to father a child on a captive woman.

The thought made him blush with shame.
"Zawada, when you come to the Derku lands, you will come as my wife," he said. "And you will not have to leave. Our son will know his mother as well as his father."
Her eyes glowed. "You are the greatest and kindest of the gods."
"No," he said, angry now, because he knew very well just exactly how far from "great" and "kind" he really was, having just imagined bringing this sweet, stubborn, brave girl into captivity. "You must never call me a god again. Ever. There is only one god, do you understand me? And it is that god that lives inside the Heaving Sea, the one that brought me to see him and sent me back here to warn my people. Call no one else a god, or you can't stay with me."
Her eyes went wide. "Is there room in the world for only one god?"
"When did a crocodile ever bury a whole land under water forever?" Naog laughed scornfully. "All my life I have thought of the Great Derku as a terrible god, worthy of the worship of brave and terrible men. But the Great Derku is just a crocodile. It can be killed with a spear. Imagine stabbing the Heaving Sea. We can't even touch it. And yet the god can lift up that whole sea and pour it over the wall into this plain. THAT isn't just a god. That is GOD."
She looked at him in awe; he wondered whether she understood. And then realized that she could not possibly have understood, because half of what he said was in the Derku language, since he didn't even know enough words in HER language to think of these thoughts, let alone say them.
Her body was young and strong, even with a baby inside it, and the next morning she was ready to travel. He did not run now, but even so they covered ground quickly, for she was a sturdy walker. He began teaching her the Derku language as they walked, and she learned well, though she made the words sound funny, as so many captives did, never able to let go of the sounds of their native tongue, never able to pronounce the new ones.
Finally he saw the mountains that separated the Derku lands from the Salty Sea, rising from the plain. "Those will be islands," said Naog, realizing it for the first time. "The highest ones. See? They're higher than the shelf of land we're walking on."
Zawada nodded wisely, but he knew that she didn't really understand what he was talking about.
"Those are the Derku lands," said Naog. "See the canals and the fields?"
She looked, but seemed to see nothing unusual at all. "Forgive me," she said, "but all I see are streams and grassland."
"But that's what I meant," said Naog. "Except that the grasses grow where we plant them, and all we plant is the grass whose seed we grind into meal. And the streams you see--they go where we want them to go. Vast circles surrounding the heart of the Derku lands. And

there in the middle, do you see that hill?"
"I think so," she said.
"We build that hill every year, after the floodwater."
She laughed. "You tell me that you aren't gods, and yet you make hills and streams and meadows wherever you want them!"
Naog set his face toward the Engu portion of the great city. "Come home with me," he said.
Since Zawada's people were so small, Naog had not realized that he had grown even taller during his manhood journey, but now as he led his ugly wife through the outskirts of the city, he realized that he was taller than everyone. It took him by surprise, and at first he was disturbed because it seemed to him that everyone had grown smaller. He even said as much to Zawada--"They're all so small"--but she laughed as if it were a joke. Nothing about the place or the people seemed small to HER.

At the edge of the Engu lands, Naog hailed the boys who were on watch. "Hai!"
"Hai!" they called back.
"I've come back from my journey!" he called.
It took a moment for them to answer. "What journey was this, tall man?"
"My manhood journey. Don't you know me? Can't you see that I'm Naog?"
The boys hooted at that. "How can you be naked when you have your napron on?"
"Naog is my manhood name," said Naog, quite annoyed now, for he had not expected to be treated with such disrespect on his return. "You probably know of my by my baby name. They called me Glogmeriss."
They hooted again. "You used to be trouble, and now you're naked!" cried the bold one. "And your wife is ugly, too!"
But now Naog was close enough that the boys could see how very tall he was. Their faces grew solemn.
"My father is Twerk," said Naog. "I return from my manhood journey with the greatest tale ever told. But more important than that, I have a message from the god who lives in the Heaving Sea. When I have given my message, people will include you in my story. They will say, 'Who were the five fools who joked about Naog's name, when he came to save us from the angry god?'"
"Twerk is dead," said one of the boys.
"The Dragon took him," said another.
"He was head of the clan, and then the Great Derku began eating human flesh again, and your father gave himself to the Dragon for the clan's sake."
"Are you truly his son?"

Naog felt a gnawing pain that he did not recognize. He would soon learn to call it grief, but it was not too different from rage. "Is this another jest of yours? I'll break your heads if it is."
"By the blood of your father in the mouth of the beast, I swear that it's true!" said the boy who had earlier been the boldest in his teasing. "If you're his son, then you're the son of a great man!"
The emotion welled up inside him. "What does this mean?" cried Naog. "The Great Derku does not eat the flesh of men! Someone has murdered my father! He would never allow such a thing!" Whether he meant his father or the Great Derku who would never allow it even Naog did not know.
The boys ran off then, before he could strike out at them for being the tellers of such an unbearable tale. Zawada was the only one left, to pat at him, embrace him, try to soothe him with her voice. She abandoned the language of the Derku and spoke to him soothingly in her own language. But all Naog could hear was the news that his father had been fed to the Great Derku as a sacrifice for the clan. The old days were back again, and they had killed his father. His father, and not even a captive!
Others of the Engu, hearing what the boys were shouting about, brought him to his mother. Then he began to calm down, hearing her voice, the gentle reassurance of the old sound. She, at least, was unchanged. Except that she looked older, yes, and tired. "It was your father's own choice," she explained to him. "After floodwater this year the Great Derku came into the pen with a human baby in its jaws. It was a two-year-old boy of the Ko clan, and it happened he was the firstborn of his parents."
"This means only that Ko clan wasn't watchful enough," said Naog.
"Perhaps," said his mother. "But the holy men saw it as a sign from the god. Just as we stopped giving human flesh to the Great Derku when he refused it, so now when he claimed a human victim, what else were we to think?"
"Captives, then. Why not captives?"
"It was your own father who said that if the Great Derku had taken a child from the families of the captives, then we would sacrifice captives. But he took a child from one of our clans. What kind of sacrifice is it, to offer strangers when the Great Derku demanded the meat of the Derku people?"
"Don't you see, Mother? Father was trying to keep them from sacrificing anybody at all, by making them choose something so painful that no one would do it."
She shook her head. "How do you know what my Twerk was trying to do? He was trying to save YOU."
"Me?"
"Your father was clan leader by then. The holy men said, 'Let each clan give the firstborn son of the clan leader.'"

"But I was gone."
"Your father insisted on the ancient privilege, that a father may go in place of his son."
"So he died in my place, because I was gone."
"If you had been here, Glogmeriss, he would have done the same."
He thought about this for a few moments, and then answered only, "My name is Naog now."
"We thought you were dead, Naked One, Stirrer of Troubles," said Mother.
"I found a wife."
"I saw her. Ugly."
"Brave and strong and smart," said Naog.
"Born to be a captive. I chose a different wife for you."
"Zawada is my wife."
Even though Naog had returned from his journey as a man and not a boy, he soon learned that even a man can be bent by the pressure of others. This far he did NOT bend: Zawada remained his wife. But he also took the wife his mother had chosen for him, a beautiful girl named Kormo. Naog was not sure what was worse about the new arrangement--that everyone else treated Kormo as Naog's real wife and Zawada as barely a wife at all, or that when Naog was hungry with passion, it was always Kormo he thought of. But he remembered Zawada at such times, how she bore him his first child, the boy Moiro; how she followed him with such fierce courage; how good she was to him when he was a stranger. And when he remembered, he followed his duty to her rather than his natural desire. This happened so often that Kormo complained about it. This made Naog feel somehow righteous, for the truth was that his first inclination had been right. Zawada should have stayed with her own tribe. She was unhappy most of the time, and kept to herself and her baby, and as years passed, her babies. She was never accepted by the other women of the Derku. Only the captive women became friends with her, which caused even more talk and criticism.
Years passed, yes, and where was Naog's great message, the one the god had gone to such great trouble to give him? He tried to tell it. First to the leaders of the Engu clan, the whole story of his journey, and how the Heaving Sea was far higher than the Salty Sea and would soon break through and cover all the land with water. They listened to him gravely, and then one by one they counseled with him that when the gods wish to speak to the Derku people, they will do as they did when the Great Derku ate a human baby. "Why would a god who wished to send a message to the Derku people choose a mere BOY as messenger?"
"Because I was the one who was taking the journey," he said.
"What will you have us do? Abandon our lands? Leave our canals behind, and our boats?"

"The Nile has fresh water and a flood season, my father saw it."

"But the Nile also has strong tribes living up and down its shores. Here we are masters of the world. No, we're not leaving on the word of a boy."

They insisted that he tell no one else, but he didn't obey them. In fact he told anyone who would listen, but the result was the same. For his father's memory or for his mother's sake, or perhaps just because he was so tall and strong, people listened politely--but Naog knew at the end of each telling of his tale that nothing had changed. No one believed him. And when he wasn't there, they repeated his stories as if they were jokes, laughing about riding a castrated bull ox, about calling a tree branch his brother, and most of all about the idea of a great flood that would never go away. Poor Naog, they said. He clearly lost his mind on his manhood journey, coming home with impossible stories that he obviously believes and an ugly woman that he dotes on.

Zawada urged him to leave. "You know that the flood is coming," she said. "Why not take your family up and out of here? Go to the Nile ourselves, or return to my father's tribe."

But he wouldn't hear of it. "I would go if I could bring my people with me. But what kind of man am I, to leave behind my mother and my brothers and sisters, my clan and all my kin?"

"You would have left me behind," she said once. He didn't answer her. He also didn't go.

In the third year after his return, when he had three sons to take riding on his dragonboat, he began the strangest project anyone had ever seen. No one was surprised, though, that crazy Naog would do something like this. He began to take several captives with him upriver to a place where tall, heavy trees grew. There they would wear out stone axes cutting down trees, then shape them into logs and ride them down the river. Some people complained that the captives belonged to everybody and it was wrong for Naog to have their exclusive use for so many days, but Naog was such a large and strange man that no one wanted to push the matter.

One or two at a time, they came to see what Naog was doing with the logs. They found that he had taught his captives to notch them and lash them together into a huge square platform, a dozen strides on a side. Then they made a second platform crossways to the first and on top of it, lashing every log to ever other log, or so it seemed. Between the two layers he smeared pitch, and then on the top of the raft he built a dozen reed structures like the tops of seedboats.

Before floodwater he urged his neighbors to bring him their grain, and he would keep it all dry. A few of them did, and when the rivers rose during floodwater, everyone saw that his huge seedboat floated,

and no water seeped up from below into the seedhouses. More to the point, Naog's wives and children also lived on the raft, dry all the time, sleeping easily through the night instead of having to remain constantly wakeful, watching to make sure the children didn't fall into the water.

The next year, Engu clan built several more platforms following Naog's pattern. They didn't always lash them as well as he had, and during the next flood several of their rafts came apart--but gradually, so they had time to move the seeds. Engu clan had far more seed make it through to planting season than any of the other tribes, and soon the men had to range farther and farther upriver, because all the nearer trees of suitable size had been harvested.

Naog himself, though, wasn't satisfied. It was Zawada who pointed out that when the great flood came, the water wouldn't rise gradually as it did in the river floods. "It'll be like the waves against the shore, crashing with such force ... and these reed shelters will never hold against such a wave."

For several years Naog experimented with logs until at last he had the largest movable structure ever built by human hands. The raft was as long as ever, but somewhat narrower. Rising from notches between logs in the upper platform were sturdy vertical posts, and these were bridged and roofed with wood. But instead of using logs for the planking and the roofing, Naog and the captives who served him split the logs carefully into planks, and these were smeared inside and out with pitch, and then another wall and ceiling were built inside, sandwiching the tar between them. People were amused to see Naog's captives hoisting dripping baskets of water to the roof of this giant seedboat and pouring them out onto it. "What, does he think that if he waters these trees, they'll grow like grass?" Naog heard them, but he cared not at all, for when they spoke he was inside his boat, seeing that not a drop of water made it inside.

The doorway was the hardest part, because it, too, had to be able to be sealed against the flood. Many nights Naog lay awake worrying about it before building this last and largest and tightest seedboat. The answer came to him in a dream. It was a memory of the little crabs that lived in the sand on the shore of the Heaving Sea. They dug holes in the sand and then when the water washed over them, their holes filled in above their heads, keeping out the water. Naog awoke knowing that he must put the door in the roof of his seedboat, and arrange a way to lash it from the inside.

"How will you see to lash it?" said Zawada. "There's no light inside."

So Naog and his three captives learned to lash the door in place in utter darkness.

When they tested it, water leaked through the edges of the door. The

solution was to smear more pitch, fresh pitch, around the edges of the openingand lay the door into it so that when they lashed it the seal was tight. It was very hard to open the door again after that, but they got it open from the inside--and when they could see again they found that not a drop of water had got inside. "No more trials," said Naog.

Their work then was to gather seeds--and more than seeds this time. Water, too. The seeds went into baskets with lids that were lashed down, and the water went into many, many flasks. Naog and his captives and their wives worked hard during every moment of daylight to make the waterbags and seedbaskets and fill them. The Engu didn't mind at all storing more and more of their grain in Naog's boat--after all, it was ludicrously watertight, so that it was sure to make it through the flood season in fine form. They didn't have to believe in his nonsense about a god in the Heaving Sea that was angry with the Derku people in order to recognize a good seedboat when they saw it.

His boat was nearly full when word spread that a group of new captives from the southeast were telling tales of a new river of saltwater that had flowed into the Salty Sea from the direction of the Heaving Sea. When Naog heard the news, he immediately climbed a tree so he could look toward the southeast. "Don't be silly," they said to him. "You can't see the Salty Shore from here, even if you climb the tallest tree."

"I was looking for the flood," said Naog. "Don't you see that the Heaving Sea must have broken through again, when a storm whipped the water into madness. Then the storm subsided, and the sea stopped flowing over the top. But the channel must be wider and longer and deeper now. Next time it won't end when the storm ends. Next time it will be the great flood."

"How do you know these things, Naog? You're a man like the rest of us. Just because you're taller doesn't mean you can see the future."

"The god is angry," said Naog. "The true god, not this silly crocodile god that you feed on human flesh." And now, in the urgency of knowing the imminence of the flood, he said what he had said to no one but Zawada. "Why do you think the true god is so angry with us? Because of the crocodile! Because we feed human flesh to the Dragon! The true god doesn't want offerings of human flesh. It's an abomination. It's as forbidden as the forbidden fruit. The crocodile god is not a god at all, it's just a wild animal, one that crawls on its belly, and yet we bow down to it. We bow down to the enemy of the true god!"

Hearing him say this made the people angry. Some were so furious

they wanted to feed him to the Great Derku at once, but Naog only laughed at them. "If the Great Derku is such a wonderful god, let HIM come and get me, instead of you taking me! But no, you don't believe for a moment that he CAN do it. Yet the TRUE god had the power to send me a castrated bull to ride, and a log to save me from a flood, and trees to catch the lightning so it wouldn't strike me. When has the Dragon ever had the power to do THAT?"

His ridicule of the Great Derku infuriated them, and violence might have resulted, had Naog not had such physical presence, and had his father not been a noble sacrifice to the Dragon. Over the next weeks, though, it became clear that Naog was now regarded by all as something between an enemy and a stranger. No one came to speak to him, or to Zawada, either. Only Kormo continued to have contact with the rest of the Derku people.

"They want me to leave you," she told him. "They want me to come back to my family, because you are the enemy of the god."

"And will you go?" he said.

She fixed her sternest gaze on him. "You are my family now," she said. "Even when you prefer this ugly woman to me, you are still my husband."

Naog's mother came to him once, to warn him. "They have decided tokill you. They're simply biding their time, waiting for the right moment."

"Waiting for the courage to fight me, you mean," said Naog.

"Tell them that a madness came upon you, but it's over," she said. "Tell them that it was the influence of this ugly foreign wife of yours, and then they'll kill her and not you."

Naog didn't bother to answer her.

His mother burst into tears. "Was this what I bore you for? I named you very well, Glogmeriss, my son of trouble and anguish!"

"Listen to me, Mother. The flood is coming. We may have very little warning when it actually comes, very little time to get into my seedboat. Stay near, and when you hear us calling--"

"I'm glad your father is dead rather than to see his firstborn son so gone in madness."

"Tell all the others, too, Mother. I'll take as many into my seedboat as will fit. But once the door in the roof is closed, I can't open it again. Anyone who isn't inside when we close it will never get inside, and they will die."

She burst into tears and left.

Not far from the seedboat was a high hill. As the rainy season neared, Naog took to sending one of his servants to the top of the hill several times a day, to watch toward the southeast. "What should we look for?" they asked. "I don't know," he answered. "A new river. A wall of water. A dark streak in the distance. It will be something that you've never seen before."

The sky filled with clouds, dark and threatening. The heart of the storm was to the south and east. Naog made sure that his wives and children and the wives and children of his servants didn't stray far from the seedboat. They freshened the water in the waterbags, to stay busy. A few raindrops fell, and then the rain stopped, and then a few more raindrops. But far to the south and east it was raining heavily. And the wind--the wind kept rising higher and higher, and it was out of the east. Naog could imagine it whipping the waves higher and farther into the deep channel that the last storm had opened. He imagined the water spilling over into the salty riverbed. He imagined it tearing deeper and deeper into the sand, more and more of it tearing away under the force of the torrent. Until finally it was no longer the force of the storm driving the water through the channel, but the weight of the whole sea, because at last it had been cut down below the level of low tide. And then the sea tearing deeper and deeper.

"Naog." It was the head of the Engu clan, and a dozen men with him. "The god is ready for you."

Naog looked at them as if they were foolish children. "This is the storm," he said. "Go home and bring your families to my seedboat, so they can come through the flood alive."

"This is no storm," said the head of the clan. "Hardly any rain has fallen."

The servant who was on watch came running, out of breath, his arms bleeding where he had skidded on the ground as he fell more than once in his haste. "Naog, master!" he cried. "It's plain to see--the Salty Shore is nearer. The Salty Sea is rising, and fast."

What a torrent of water it would take, to make the Salty Sea rise in its bed. Naog covered his face with his hands. "You're right," said Naog. "The god is ready for me. The true god. It was for this hour that I was born. As for YOUR god--the true god will drown him as surely as he will drown anyone who doesn't come to my seedboat."

"Come with us now," said the head of the clan. But his voice was not so certain now.

To his servants and his wives, Naog said, "Inside the seedboat. When all are in, smear on the pitch, leaving only one side where I can slide down."

"You come too, husband," said Zawada.

"I can't," he said. "I have to give warning one last time."

"Too late!" cried the servant with the bleeding arms. "Come now."

"You go now," said Naog. "I'll be back soon. But if I'm not back, seal the door and open it for no man, not even me."

"When will I know to do that?" he asked in anguish.

"Zawada will tell you," said Naog. "She'll know." Then he turned to the head of the clan. "Come with me," he said. "Let's give the warning." Then Naog strode off toward the bank of the canal where

his mother and brothers and sisters kept their dragonboats. The men who had come to capture him followed him, unsure who had captured whom.

It was raining again, a steady rainfall whipped by an ever-stronger wind. Naog stood on the bank of the canal and shouted against the wind, crying out for his family to join him. "There's not much time!" he cried. "Hurry, come to my seedboat!"

"Don't listen to the enemy of the god!" cried the head of the clan.

Naog looked down into the water of the canal. "Look, you fools! Can't you see that the canal is rising?"

"The canal always rises in a storm."

Naog knelt down and dipped his hand into the canal and tasted the water. "Salt," he said. "Salt!" he shouted. "This isn't rising because of rain in the mountains! The water is rising because the Salty Sea is filling with the water of the Heaving Sea. It's rising to cover us! Come with me now, or not at all! When the door of my seedboat closes, we'll open it for no one." Then he turned and loped off toward the seedboat.

By the time he got there, the water was spilling over the banks of the canals, and he had to splash through several shallow streams where there had been no streams before. Zawada was standing on top of the roof, and screamed at him to hurry as he clambered onto the top of it. He looked in the direction she had been watching, and saw what she had seen. In the distance, but not so very far away, a dark wall rushing toward them. A plug of earth must have broken loose, and a fist of the sea hundreds of feet high was slamming through the gap. It spread at once, of course, and as it spread the wave dropped until it was only fifteen or twenty feet high. But that was high enough. It would do.

"You fool!" cried Zawada. "Do you want to watch it or be saved from it?"

Naog followed Zawada down into the boat. Two of the servants smeared on a thick swatch of tar on the fourth side of the doorway. Then Naog, who was the only one tall enough to reach outside the hole, drew the door into place, snugging it down tight. At once it became perfectly dark inside the seedboat, and silent, too, except for the breathing. "This time for real," said Naog softly. He could hear the other men working at the lashings. They could feel the floor moving under them--the canals had spilled over so far now that the raft was rising and floating.

Suddenly they heard a noise. Someone was pounding on the wall of the seedboat. And there was shouting. They couldn't hear the words, the walls were too thick. But they knew what was being said all the same. Save us. Let us in. Save us.

Kormo's voice was filled with anguish. "Naog, can't we--"
"If we open it now we'll never close it again in time. We'd all die. They had every chance and every warning. My lashing is done."
"Mine too," answered one of the servants.
The silence of the others said they were still working hard.
"Everyone hold onto the side posts," said Naog. "There's so much room here. We could have taken on so many more."
The pounding outside was in earnest now. They were using axes to hack at the wood. Or at the lashings. And someone was on top of the seedboat now, many someones, trying to pry at the door.
"Now, O God, if you mean to save us at all, send the water now."
"Done," said another of the servants. So three of the four corners were fully lashed.
Suddenly the boat lurched and rocked upward, then spun crazily in every direction at once. Everyone screamed, and few were able to keep their handhold, such was the force of the flood. They plunged to one side of the seedboat, a jumble of humans and spilling baskets and water bottles. Then they struck something--a tree? The side of a mountain?--and lurched in another direction entirely, and in the darkness it was impossible to tell anymore whether they were on the floor or the roof or one of the walls.
Did it go on for days, or merely hours? Finally the awful turbulence gave way to a spinning all in one plane. The flood was still rising; they were still caught in the twisting currents; but they were no longer caught in that wall of water, in the great wave that the god had sent. They were on top of the flood.
Gradually they sorted themselves out. Mothers found their children, husbands found their wives. Many were crying, but as the fear subsided they were able to find the ones who were genuinely in pain. But what could they do in the darkness to deal with bleeding injuries, or possible broken bones? They could only plead with the god to be merciful and let them know when it was safe to open the door.
After a while, though, it became plain that it wasn't safe NOT to open it. The air was musty and hot and they were beginning to pant.
"I can't breathe," said Zawada. "Open the door," said Kormo.
Naog spoke aloud to the god. "We have no air in here," he said. "I have to open the door. Make it safe. Let no other wave wash over us with the door open."
But when he went to open the door, he couldn't find it in the darkness. For a sickening moment he thought: What if we turned completely upside down, and the door is now under us? I never thought of that. We'll die in here.
Then he found it, and began fussing with the lashings. But it was hard in the darkness. They had tied so hurriedly, and he wasn't thinking all that well. But soon he heard the servants also at work,

muttering softly, and one by one they got their lashings loose and Naog shoved upward on the door.
It took forever before the door budged, or so it seemed, but when at last it rocked upward, a bit of faint light and a rush of air came into the boat and everyone cried out at once in relief and gratitude. Naog pushed the door upward and then maneuvered it to lie across the opening at an angle, so that the heavy rain outside wouldn't inundate them. He stood there holding the door in place, even though the wind wanted to pick it up and blow it away--a slab of wood as heavy as that one was!--while in twos and threes they came to the opening and breathed, or lifted children to catch a breath of air. There was enough light to bind up some bleeding injuries, and to realize that no bones were broken after all.
The rain went on forever, or so it seemed, the rain and the wind. And then it stopped, and they were able to come out onto the roof of the seedboat and look at the sunlight and stare at the distant horizon. There was no land at all, just water. "The whole earth is gone," said Kormo. "Just as you said.
"The Heaving Sea has taken over this place," said Naog. "But we'll come to try land. The current will take us there."
There was much debris floating on the water--torn-up trees and bushes, for the flood had scraped the whole face of the land. A few rotting bodies of animals. If anyone saw a human body floating by, they said nothing about it.
After days, a week, perhaps longer of floating without sight of land, they finally began skirting a shoreline. Once they saw the smoke of someone's fire--people who lived high above the great valley of the Salty Sea had been untouched by the flood. But there was no way to steer the boat toward shore. Like a true seedboat, it drifted unless something drew it another way. Naog cursed himself for his foolishness in not including dragonboats in the cargo of the boat. He and the other men and women might have tied lines to the seedboat and to themselves and paddled the boat to shore. As it was, they would last only as long as their water lasted.
It was long enough. The boat fetched up against a grassy shore. Naog sent several of the servants ashore and they used a rope to tie the boat to a tree. But it was useless--the current was still too strong, and the boat tore free. They almost lost the servants, stranding them on the shore, forever separated from their families, but they had the presence of mind to swim for the end of the rope.
The next day they did better--more lines, all the men on shore, drawing the boat further into a cove that protected it from the current. They lost no time in unloading the precious cargo of seeds, and searching for a source of fresh water. Then they began the unaccustomed task of hauling all the baskets of grain by hand. There were no canals to ease the labor.

"Perhaps we can find a place to dig canals again," said Kormo.
"No!" said Zawada vehemently. "We will never build such a place again. Do you want the god to send another flood?"
"There will be no other flood," said Naog. "The Heaving Sea has had its victory. But we will also build no canals. We will keep no crocodile, or any other animal as our god. We will never sacrifice forbidden fruit to any god, because the true god hates those who do that. And we will tell our story to anyone who will listen to it, so that others will learn how to avoid the wrath of the true god, the god of power."
Kemal watched as Naog and his people came to shore not far from Gibeil and set up farming in the El Qa' Valley in the shadows of the mountains of Sinai. The fact of the flood was well known, and many travelers came to see this vast new sea where once there had been dry land. More and more of them also came to the new village that Naog and his people built, and word of his story also spead.
Kemal's work was done. He had found Atlantis. He had found Noah, and Gilgamesh. Many of the stories that had collected around those names came from other cultures and other times, but the core was true, and Kemal had found them and brought them back to the knowledge of humankind.
But what did it mean? Naog gave warning, but no one listened. His story remained in people's minds, but what difference did it make? As far as Kemal was concerned, all old-world civilizations after Atlantis were dependent on that first civilization. The IDEA of the city was already with the Egyptians and the Sumerians and the people of the Indus and even the Chinese, because the story of the Derku people, under one name or another, had spread far and wide--the Golden Age. People remembered well that once there was a great land that was blessed by the gods until the sea rose up and swallowed their land. People who lived in different landscapes tried to make sense of the story. To the island-hopping Greeks Atlantis became an island that sank into the sea. To the plains-dwelling Sumerians the flood was caused by rain, not by the sea leaping out of its bed to swallow the earth. Someone wondered how, if all the land was covered, the animals survived, and thus the account of animals two by two was added to the story of Naog. At some point, when people still remembered that the name meant "naked," a story was added about his sons covering his nakedness as he lay in a drunken stupor.
All of this was decoration, however. People remembered both the Derku people and the one man who led his family through the flood. But they would have remembered Atlantis with or without Naog, Kemal knew that. What difference did his saga make, to anyone but himself and his household? As others studied the culture of the Derku, Kemal remained focused on Naog himself. If anything, Naog's life was proof that one person makes no difference at all in history. He saw the

flood coming, he warned his people about it when there was plenty of time, he showed them how to save themselves, and yet nothing changed outside his own immediate family group. That was the way history worked. Great forces sweep people along, and now and then somebody floats to the surface and becomes famous but it means nothing, it amounts to nothing.

Yet Kemal could not believe it. Naog may not have accomplished what he THOUGHT his goal was--to save his people--but he did accomplish something. He never lived to see the result of it, but because of his survival the Atlantis stories were tinged with something else. It was not just a golden age, not just a time of greatness and wealth and leisure and city life, a land of giants and gods. Naog's version of the story also penetrated the public consciousness and remained. The people were destroyed because the greatest of gods was offended by their sins. The list of sins shifted and changed over time, but certain ideas remained: That it was wrong to live in a city, where people get lifted up in the pride of their hearts and think that they are too powerful for the gods to destroy. That the one who seems to be crazy may in fact be the only one who sees the truth. That the greatest of gods is the one you can't see, the one who has power over the earth and the sea and the sky, all at once. And, above all, this: That it was wrong to sacrifice human beings to the gods.

It took thousands of years, and there were places where Naog's passionate doctrine did not penetrate until modern times, but the root of it was there in the day he came home and found that his father had been fed to the Dragon. Those who thought that it was right to offer human beings to the Dragon were all dead, and the one who had long proclaimed that it was wrong was still alive. The god had preserved him and killed all of them. Wherever the idea of Atlantis spread, some version of this story came with it, and in the end all the great civilizations that were descended from Atlantis learned not to offer the forbidden fruit to the gods.

In the Americas, though, no society grew up that owed a debt to Atlantis, for the same rising of the world ocean that closed the land bridge between Yemen and Djibouti also broke the land bridge between America and the old world. The story of Naog did not touch there, and it seemed to Kemal absolutely clear what the cost of that was. Because they had no memory of Atlantis, it took the people of the Americas thousands of years longer to develop civilization--the city. Egypt was already ancient when the Olmecs first built amid the swampy land of the bay of Campeche. And because they had no story of Naog, warning that the most powerful of gods rejected killing human beings, the old ethos of human sacrifice remained in full force, virtually unquestioned. The carnage of the Mexica--the Aztecs--took it to the extreme, but it was there already, throughout the

Caribbean basin, a tradition of human blood being shed to feed the hunger of the gods.

Kemal could hardly say that the bloody warfare of the old world was much of an improvement over this. But it was different, and in his mind, at least, it was different specifically because of Naog. If he had not ridden out the flood to tell his story of the true God who forbade sacrifice, the old world would not have been the same. New civilizations might have risen more quickly, with no stories warning of the danger of city life. And those new civilizations might all have worshiped the same Dragon, or some other, as hungry for human flesh as the gods of the new world were hungry for human blood.

On the day that Kemal became sure that his Noah had actually changed the world, he was satisfied. He said little and wrote nothing about his conclusion. This surprised even him, for in all the months and years that he had searched hungrily for Atlantis, and then for Noah, and then for the meaning of Noah's saga, Kemal had assumed that, like Schliemann, he would publish everything, he would tell the world the great truth that he had found. But to his surprise he discovered that he must not have searched so far for the sake of science, or for fame, or for any other motive than simply to know, for himself, that one person's life amounted to something. Naog changed the world, but then so did Zawada, and so did Kormo, and so did the servant who skinned his elbows running down the hill, and so did Naog's father and mother, and ... and in the end, so did they all. The great forces of history were real, after a fashion. But when you examined them closely, those great forces always came down to the dreams and hungers and judgments of individuals. The choices they made were real. They mattered.

Apparently that was all that Kemal had needed to know. The next day he could think of no reason to go to work. He resigned from his position at the head of the Atlantis project. Let others do the detail work. Kemal was well over thirty now, and he had found the answer to his great question, and it was time to get down to the business of living.