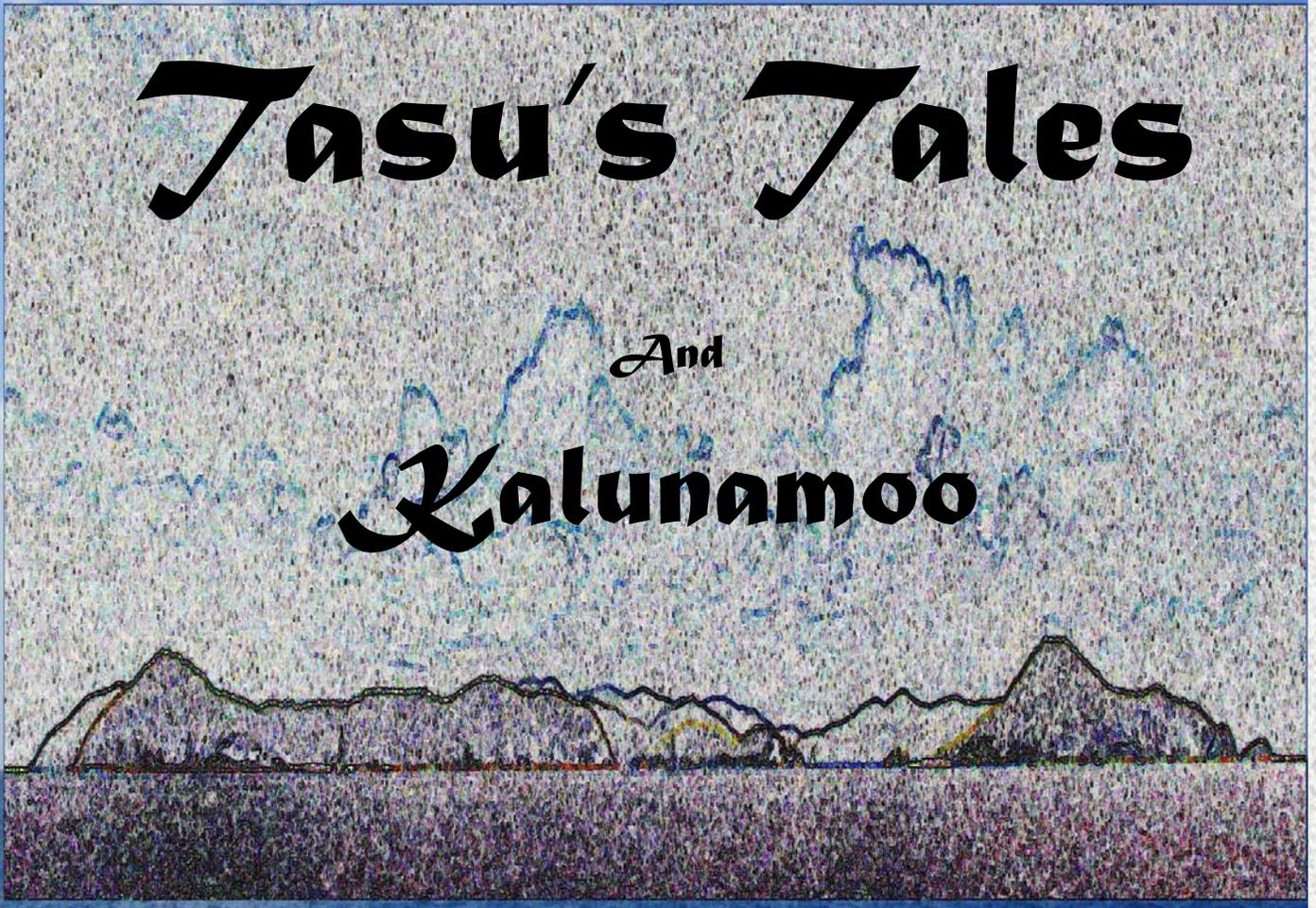


Tasu's Tales

And

Kalunamoo



By

William H. Woodroffe

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Dedicated to my Wife and the Admiral of Kalunamoo, Maureen, for her help in preparing and editing this manuscript.

The Legend of Kalunamoo (abridged)

The Legend of Kalunamoo appeared in various forms and fragments but most substantially in *The Shores of the Pacific Ocean* by Sir Arthur Eddington published in London in 1894 (out of print). Eddington's book was a compilation of stories, folktales, legends and accounts from Pacific Island natives but is now lost to history under mysterious circumstances. This legend is the introductory story of Tasu and the beginning of her great adventures of that time and of the people known as Moos.

Before the arrival of the present day people of South Australia it was populated by those who were known as the Moos. Moo was the native name for the sea that these people fished and for many it was the focal point of their lives. Dependent as they were on the sea they became known as Moos. The moos lived ordinary lives but they could not be called simple people. Their rituals and traditions were as rich and intricate as many other people of that time. Dress, language and perhaps different foods separate one from another, but cohesive groups of people, living in a community, share the same goals in life and by and large act in similar fashions. But the Moos did have a quirk that gave rise to strange tales and events. One of these tales became known as the Legend of Kalunamoo.

The Moos quirk was unique. They instinctively knew with strong certainty what was good for them. From early childhood to old age they could identify the right fruit to eat, the right fish to catch, the right path home or the right people to befriend. In this way they differed from others and lead them to do strange things. At least it seemed strange to others and certainly would seem strange to us today. For example, a Moo might come across an odd looking fruit. Perhaps it washed ashore from a nearby island or brought ashore by some people from a distant land. Without question the Moo may decide immediately that fruit was poisonous. If so, and upon proclaiming such a fact, without so much as sniffing the item, other Moos would agree and henceforth no similar fruit would ever pass the lips of any Moo. It wasn't a matter of heresy if someone would try to eat the fruit, it just wasn't thought of.

At the foothills of the Southern Range and about a days walk from the moo in the town of Tak, lived a young girl named Tasu. Like all Moos she too determined with instant certainty what was good or bad. Tasu loved early morning walks in the foothills to explore the small gullies and glens that dotted the area. It was her way to break free of the daily routine of village life. It was on one of these walks, hikes to us city folk that she came across a particularly beautiful canyon. It wasn't really a canyon, as it was still only in the foothills but it was larger than the gullies formed by the summer downpours in that somewhat arid region.

The canyon was deep and had odd shaped twists, turns and overhangs. Tasu explored the beautiful and mysterious canyon but was soon afraid that she was lost in its labyrinth pathways. It so happened that on this particular day the sun, known as La, and the moon, known as Luna, were both visible in the sky. This happens for a few weeks each month and is not unusual. Clouds scurried overhead while low in the east La rose and in the west Luna was setting. As Tasu became hopelessly lost she came upon a spot in the valley where two beams of light, streaming in from two different directions, met. From the east between the twisting turning canyon walls came a narrow beam of sunlight. From the west, between equally twisting canyon walls came a narrow beam of moonlight and they met on her young face. Half her face was bathed in the early morning sunlight while the other half in the waning moonlight of the night. Clouds obscured the overhead sky, lit neither by sun, moon or stars. The canyon walls blocked any view of the surrounding glen or the distant sights of the waking village of Tak. Deep in the earth, literally within the grasp of rock, sand, roots and the confining canyon walls, and in the light of La and Luna, the certainty Tasu always had of the way home evaporated. And yet, surrounded by all this, in the bowels of the earth, lost and confused, the light also illuminated a way forward. How strange this was, thought Tasu. Somehow it gave her the means to find a way out of the canyon.

Tasu, moved by these events, was forever changed. She hoped that all Moos could have the same experience. She was not aware that it was only possible when the sun and moon were in those exact positions in the heavens relative to the canyon to shine their beams of light to meet at the height of Tasu's face. Of course, Tasu didn't know this. The Moos had only rudimentary knowledge of the motions of the sun, moon and stars and not the detailed observations to recognize that this particular alignment happens once every 26,000 years. Tasu was determined, however, to share this good fortune with others.

Tasu explained to the people of Tak the events in the canyon and they fully agreed that the occurrence was something all Moos should experience although they didn't understand exactly why. Moos combed the canyons trying to duplicate the experiences of Tasu but to no avail. Tasu herself never experienced the same event again but she never forgot that day in the canyon. From then on her life was full of mystery, adventure, love and joy. Strife and hardship were also part of it but she lived long enough to see the birth of her great grandchildren. She never gave up hope of experiencing that day in the canyon again despite having high adventures which, if the stories are half true, must have made that day in the canyon pale by comparison.

Many people besides Moos searched for the same experience. Having firmly attested to the goodness of this event they forever referred to it as Kalunamoo. The belief that the merging of opposites propelled Tasu through her adventurous life is shared by many.

Preface

In 2009 a thin dusty volume was found in a London bookstore titled *Tasu's Tales*. It was thought that the author, Benjamin Fallstaf, was a turn of the century (20th) writer of children's books, but it turned out that the book was written almost 100 years before that. Fallstaff translated an Indian manuscript, or a part of that manuscript, and published it as *Tasu's Tales* in 1820. The story is an accounting of the early times of a small South Australian group of people that was handed down verbally and probably written about 600 years ago as "the manuscripts of Bombay".

Fallstaf translated that written account - it was written in an obscure Indian dialect - but gave no hint to the whereabouts of the "manuscripts". Since he referenced manuscripts (multiple), is *Tasu's Tales* the complete translation of all manuscripts or only excerpted sections concerning Tasu? Do other stories or tales exist but were not translated? Since Fallstaf's book has gaps and overlaps that sometime conflict with any continuous narrative, I believe he excerpted sections. If that is the case then the manuscripts held other stories and are yet to be found and translated. It is unknown if Sir Arthur Eddington ever read or heard about *Tasu's Tales* or the manuscripts when he compiled his *Shores of the Pacific Ocean* in 1894. It was not in the bibliography of that work nor was it mentioned in any of his other writings or legends of the Moos of South Australia.

The Moo people or tribe apparently died out like so many other lost civilizations and vanished from any other oral or written history. Yet other people of the same time and approximate place were documented and accounted for. It is probable that the Moos had descendents or at least relatives within those other tribes.

It took a coincidence of timing that linked the Eddington account and the Tales together and made this publication possible.

Forward

I was sitting on my boat in St Mary's, Georgia when an older well dressed gentleman walked down the dock, looking over the boats in the marina. He didn't seem to be searching for anything in particular, just taking a walk on a lovely spring day. He came up by my boat and came to a quick stop. He looked at it for a long time and seemed deep in thought. I assumed he was admiring the boat as it is a classic looking William Garden designed cruising boat. With a bow sprit, teak decks and a fine sheer line, it was, as some would say, "what a sailboat should look like." I walked up to the bow and smiled at him and was prepared to hear his compliment on my fine looking sailboat.

"Where did you get that name"?

I smiled as I often get asked about the boat's name. *Kalunamoo* is not a common name. People try to pronounce it, it is actually very easy to pronounce, and then ask, "What does it mean?" It is almost mandatory that a boat name mean something. It usually reflects the owner's ambition or pretention or if nothing else the name of the owner's lover. *Kalunamoo* has a story but it is usually too long to keep anyone's interest. So it was odd that this gentleman didn't ask what the name meant but where I got it from.

"Oh, I read about it. It comes from the South Seas, around Australia, a long story."

"Really! Mind if I see what you were reading at the time?" the gentlemen asked.

"Come on aboard."

The gentleman's name was Herb Cohen. He lived with his wife in Georgia after he sold his business and retired. He spent years traveling the world as his business was in essential oils: buying, selling and trading essential oils all over the world. He said he had enough of that and settled down in a small Georgia town. The weather was good and he liked the pace of a small town, "never want to see an airport again". The only thing he missed in his travels was collecting books. He was somewhat of a collector. Nothing too extensive or expensive, just interesting books he came across on his travels.

In 2005 he was on one of his last business trips to London and had some free time so he took in a book fair. It involved small booksellers and promoted what could be considered "one hit wonders" - those books or authors that published very few books or works that were successful.

In the book store, Baunt Books in Mayfair, Herb picked up *Tasu's Tales* hoping to find a good children's book to give to his grandson. It was placed among the many other young person's books. As he thumbed through it, he found it odd that it didn't seem like a children's book or story. He liked the name Tasu and decided to purchase the book. He enjoyed the story and kept the book on his bookshelf and didn't think much of it after that.

When he saw *Kalunamoo* written on the bow of my boat, he recalled *Tasu's Tales* as it was mentioned in that book. He said we should get together in his house that evening for dinner and he will show me the book. We made a date and that night my wife and I found our way to his small house not too far from the marina.

Herb had a lovely wife but he was the cook. Dealing in essential oils, he learned how to spice up even the blandest dishes with spices and exotic oils. Chicken in a curry sauce with fresh vegetables was a delight that neither my wife nor I would even attempt to duplicate. Good wine complimented the meal as we talked about our travels up and down the

coast in our boat and he talked about his travels all over the world. But we both became excited when we talked about *Kalunamoo* and *Tasu's Tales*.

He gingerly pulled the old book from his bookshelf and asked to see what I had. I was a little embarrassed as all I had was an old printed page titled *The Legend of Kalunamoo* (abridged edition). I bought it in some craft fair years ago. I found no other history or mention of its context since then. I was intrigued by the legend and thought it would be a good name for our boat; the boat that would take us to new adventures in our retirement.

He felt a little disappointed in that this was an account, and an abridged account no less, not an original document. But the story complimented, and in some way independently verified, the tale told in his volume. He was excited to see the mention of Eddington as it reminded him of something else he saw in Baunt Books.

He recalled that on the way out of the shop by the cashier he saw a flyer titled "Have You Seen These Books?" It looked like a wanted poster and it listed books that were out of print but were wanted by various buyers. He recalled that half way down the list was *Shores of the Pacific Ocean* by Sir Arthur Eddington. For some reason it stuck in his mind, maybe because at the time he was traveling to the shores of the Pacific for his business. He would poke around in Brisbane and Sydney when he had the opportunity.

He never did come across that book even when he was in Australia. But there was a small restaurant there called *Tasu's Seed*. The owner had no knowledge of where the name came from and thought *Tasu* was some sort of plant or fruit. The restaurant was bought from the previous owner and he kept the name as it seemed to fit the image he had of the restaurant. But like the flyer, the name stuck in his head and a possible link to the book he found in London. And then after all these years, he sees *Kalunamoo*.

The publisher and author of *Tasu's Tales* are long gone. We could not find *Shores of the Pacific Ocean* and so Herb thought it would be good if I republished *Tasu's Tales* and include the "abridged" work, *The Legend of Kalunamoo* as an introduction. It is our intention to continue to search for

more works that can add to this tale as we are sure there must be more to the history of the Moos and Tasu that have survived after all these years.

The Legend of Kalunamoo

(abridged)

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Before the arrival of the present day people of South Australia, it was populated by those who were known as the Moos. Moo was the native name for the sea that these people fished and for many it was the focal point of their lives. Dependent as they were on the sea they became known as Moos. The Moos lived ordinary lives but they could not be called simple people. Their rituals and traditions were as rich and intricate as many other people of that time. Dress, language and perhaps different foods separate one from another, but cohesive groups of people, living in a community, share the same goals in life and by and large act in similar fashions. But the Moos did have a quirk that gave rise to strange tales and events. One of these tales became known as the Legend of Kalunamoo.

The Moos quirk was unique. They instinctively knew with strong certainty what was good for them. From early childhood to old age they could identify the right fruit to eat, the right fish to catch, the right path home or the right people to befriend. In this way they differed from others and lead them to do strange things. At least it seemed strange to others and certainly would seem strange to us today. For example, a Moo might come across an odd looking fruit. Perhaps it washed ashore from a nearby island or brought ashore by some people from a distant land. Without question the Moo may decide immediately that the fruit was poisonous. If so, and upon

proclaiming such a fact, without so much as sniffing the item, other Moos would agree and henceforth no similar fruit would ever pass the lips of any Moo. It wasn't a matter of heresy if someone would try to eat the fruit, it just wasn't thought of.

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At the foothills of the Southern Range and about a day's walk from the moo in the town of Tak, lived a young girl named Tasu. Like all Moos, she too determined with instant certainty what was good or bad. Tasu loved early morning walks in the foothills to explore the small gullies and glens that dotted the area. It was her way to break free of the daily routine of village life. It was on one of these walks, hikes to us city folk that she came across a particularly beautiful canyon. It wasn't really a canyon, as it was still only in the foothills but it was larger than the gullies formed by the summer downpours in that somewhat arid region.

The canyon was deep and had odd shaped twists, turns and overhangs. Tasu explored the beautiful and mysterious canyon but was soon afraid that she was lost in its labyrinth pathways. It so happened that on this particular day the sun, known as Ka, and the moon, known as Luna, were both visible in the sky. This happens for a few weeks each month and is not unusual. Clouds scurried overhead while low in the east Ka rose and in the west Luna was setting. As Tasu became hopelessly lost she came upon a spot in the valley where two beams of light, streaming in from two different directions, met. From the east between the twisting turning canyon walls came a narrow beam of sunlight. From the west, between equally twisting canyon walls came a narrow beam of moonlight and they met on her young face. Half her face was bathed in the early morning sunlight while the other half in the waning moonlight of the night. Clouds obscured the overhead sky, lit neither by sun, moon or stars. The canyon walls blocked any view of the surrounding glen or the distant sights of the waking village of Tak. Deep

in the earth, literally within the grasp of rock, sand, roots and the confining canyon walls, and in the light of Ka and Luna, the certainty Tasu always had of the way home evaporated. And yet, surrounded by all this, in the bowels of the earth, lost and confused, the light also illuminated a way forward. How strange this was, thought Tasu. Somehow it gave her the means to find a way out of the canyon.

Tasu, moved by these events, was forever changed. She hoped that all Moos could have the same experience. She was not aware that it was only possible when the sun and moon were in those exact positions in the heavens relative to the canyon to shine their beams of light to meet at the height of Tasu's face. Of course, Tasu didn't know this. The Moos had only rudimentary knowledge of the motions of the sun, moon and stars and not the detailed observations to recognize that this particular alignment happens once every 26,000 years. Tasu was determined, however, to share this good fortune with others.

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Many people beside Moos searched for the same experience. Having firmly attested to the goodness of this event they forever referred to it as Kalunamoo. The belief that the merging of opposites propelled Tasu through her adventurous life, is shared by many.

Tasu's Tales

Translated from The Manuscripts of Bombay
by Benjamin Fallstaf

Published in Bombay in 1820 as a translation.

Book One **Nuria**

Did You Hear?

“Did you hear?” asked the young Kaif. He was excited to relay the news of his cousin, Tasu, that he heard from the boat people who just landed at the town's dock. He was always the first one down at the docks, roaming between the bales of goods being offloaded or being moved from the nearby warehouses to the waiting boats. Kaif was mesmerized by the stories of other lands and especially any news of the adventures of Tasu, always asking and looking for information from the voyagers and sailors stopping at Tak

The last time he saw Tasu he was only 10 or 11 years old, that was 10 years ago. Ever since she sailed away he hurried down from tilling his family's field overlooking the harbor when he saw the sail of a bekre come into the harbor. Bekres were the boats that carried goods and news from

different parts of the lands and islands of the Moos. It was always the highlight of his day.

On this day he learned that Tasu was no longer on Nuria, an island far to the east. He knew that she was on the island for a few years and the people on Nuria were thrilled to have her stay with them. But the news was that she left the island for another great adventure and to defend Nuria. Not many details were known but in time the full details will filter back to Tak. It would add to the already famous adventures of Tasu.

It was only three days until Kalunamoo, the day the people of Tak celebrated the experience Tasu had in her homeland. It was an exciting time to live in Tak, especially if one was related to Tasu. The whole town was famous because of Tasu and that had consequences. Two of the consequences were the influence and wealth that rose with the rise of Tasu's notoriety. Kalunamoo attracted people from the surrounding countryside and nearby islands. Each year, and it has been many since Tasu left Tak, more and more men, women, and families make the journey to Tak for the celebration. They would visit the large gully that Tasu made famous, searching for the same experience she had.

The town's elders were very pleased with this development. They knew instinctively that it was good. It was right. It was the way it was meant to be. Merchants prospered as the visitors bought goods they did not see before. They brought goods that they could sell or barter. They also needed supplies for their return journey after the celebrations. And there were many celebrations, as the events expanded into almost a week of festivities. The owners and workers of the taverns and inns were overjoyed with the increased business they experienced. The towns wealthiest citizens promoted and encouraged these celebrations as it helped them accumulate more wealth than they could ever imagine.

The celebrations included feasts provided by the local farmers and fisherman, all at a modest cost. Musical entertainment employed the musicians almost constantly; there were never enough musicians to

entertain the throngs that showed up. Musicians from far away made the journey and could make more money during the celebrations than they do for the rest of the year.

The inns expanded by adding tents to accommodate the additional guests. With so many different people in Tak at one time, trade was strengthened as deals and business was easily conducted during the celebration.

Tasu didn't see any of this expanded activity as she left years prior to share her experience with people other than those on Tak. As the stories of her travels reached back to her home they only reinforced the belief that her experiences at Tak should be experienced by all. The fact that the power, influence and wealth of Tak increased at the same time was proof that this was good. Not that any proof was needed, as the Moos themselves didn't need proof. They were of singular mind on almost all circumstances.

What Kaif heard that day made his heart race. It would be another great adventure. Tasu defending Nuria! The people of Nuria were among the most feared Moos of the region. Nuria was a large island but didn't have many farms and the fishing, due to the treacherous sea surrounding the island, was not bountiful. The inhabitants had to rely on other islands and lands to provide them with the food and goods they needed. But what did they have in return? They had some spices, especially salt, but mostly they had their strong will. What they called the Nuriam power of being. When other Moos were in conflict one side or the other called for some Nuriam power to settle any dispute. For this they supplied Nuria with the food and supplies that island lacked. The Nuriam was more than persuasive talk. They also had the swords and weapons to back up their decisions.

The boat people who came to Tak for Kalunamoo were not from Nuria. They were on a voyage from their land for Kalunamoo but landed on Nuria to deliver their tribute for their share of Nuriam. While there, they heard the latest quest of Tasu. They learned that the great Nurian people were enchanted by Tasu and what she experienced. Tasu had the ability of

looking at two sides of a problem and finding the correct answer. This was the specialty of Nuria so she was very welcomed there. Tasu stayed for many months on the island and gained the confidence and trust of those people.

And all this had benefited the small village of Tak which grew more important each year although without the knowledge of Tasu.

The Strength and Wisdom

The strength and wisdom that Tasu had grew every day she was on Nuria. She began by advising and then by instructing the elders of Nuria on the same subjects they were known for: making decisions to settle disputes. They found her wise beyond her years and after a while some of her followers respected her more than the elders of Nuria. At first the elders were amused; but then feared that Tasu, not being from Nuria, could undermine their influence when she sailed to other islands and lands. The other Moos may not need the Nuriam to help them in their disputes. Not only their livelihood but also the well being of all of Nuria could be at risk.

But there was another reason they were concerned. Tasu and her stories had a slightly different affect on people that worried them. The elders of Nuria, like all the people known as Moos, instinctively decided what was good, what was proper. The Nuria used that instinct, combined with their influence and their swords to enforce their decisions upon the rest of the Moos. Tasu saw that each side of a problem always had some merit and gave thought to the proper way to solve the problem. Many times she declared that neither side was right and that a third way, a compromise way, was the proper answer to the problem. This was not something that was

discussed by the elders. They came to their judgment based on tradition and what they instinctively saw as right. One side was always right, the other always wrong. There was no need to see or consider the other side. Once a decision was made, it was made for all time. Tasu seemed to be saying that there were other reasons to decide the right answer besides tradition and instinct.

Tasu was not on Nuria when the boat people who were on their way to Tak stopped there. She was sent by the elders to a great quest to the north. A great demon, some believe a dragon or serpent, lay to the north and Tasu, with her strong following of Nuria's bravest fighters went to defeat the demon. This was deemed very good and worthy of the trust all the people put in Tasu. All bekres were to deliver this news to the other islands.

Tasu Was Much Respected

Tasu was much respected on Nuria and sat with the elders and after a short time partook in all their decisions and plans. Tasu was on the island with her husband Joual and their two sons, Janaw and Duan. They spent their days tilling a small plot of land near the town. It barely provided enough for themselves but they were happy to be together. Tasu spent much of her time with the people of the town and explained the good fortune of Tak and her experience there.

The elders of the town, led by Siam, were wise and respected men and always held the town's interest at heart in upholding traditions and judgments. The island of Nuria was prosperous and the many bekres that called came to pay the tribute that other lands owed. But there was an uneasiness that was slowly overtaking the people. Siam first mentioned it in passing to a few other elders but made no mention of concern.

But not long after, Siam became more concerned and asked Lillam, another elder, to find out the reason for this uneasiness. Lillam talked to

many people and in a few days reported that there was a growing menace that Siam did not discover but was the source of this uneasiness. It was not other islands or lands that posed a threat. The soldiers of Nuria were well equipped to help the other islands with their problems. It was in that way that the Nuria collected the needed resources to make their homes the envy of everyone. The threat was the demons on the island of Panora.

Most Moos had heard the tales and stories of this far away island from their fathers, grandfathers and great grandfathers. It was a dark and evil place where demons and devils ruled. Everyone stepping onto its shore would be corrupted and then be devoured by the evil of the island. Their backs would bend, their hands turned into claws like birds; their skin would turn dark, their feet became large and their hair grew thin; their voices became shrill, and their eyes would be as red as the setting sun. They would not die but would survive as demons. Most of these stories could never be verified because they happened many years before and, as far as anyone could remember, no one ever came back from Panora.

When Siam and Liliam began to mention Panora in their conversations they didn't seem too concerned as they assured the people that Panora was a long way away and that they were safe. Yes, the uneasiness that sprung from Panora did affect Nuria but, if needed, the soldiers of Nuria would protect them. Not that they needed protection, since no one on Nuria was planning to visit Panora. But they did say that they had new reports of a flying demon, like a dragon, that lived on Panora. It was sighted a few times flying off the island and that was a concern and the source of the uneasiness on Nuria.

Nobody on Nuria ever heard of a flying dragon on Panora or anywhere else. No old stories or tales ever mentioned such a creature but since the elders reported it, it was not questioned at all. Strange tales were always told of Panora and this tale was just another so there was no questioning the elders, even if anyone would think about it.

Not long after, on a dark and stormy day when the elders held a town meeting, they announced that the flying demon was seen flying very near Nuria.

“The demon is near and I fear it could strike at us!” exclaimed Siam. “We should take care in venturing out of town, or by ourselves, until we can confront this threat”.

“What can we do? How do we protect ourselves”, a man in the crowd shouted. The whole crowd began shouting and demanding answers to their questions. Reports of others seeing the demon, were circulating among the crowd as tensions grew. It was told that at night, flashes in the sky were the dragon’s fiery breath; sudden gusts of wind were the flapping of the beast’s huge wings. Only in darkness was this dragon circling the town. But who knew when it would return in daylight?

“Keep calm. We are not under attack yet” exclaimed Siam.

“Yet!” shouted Lila. “We must never be under attack at all!” The crowd roared their approval as Lila glanced toward Siam with a slight smile on his lips.

Siam stood up and raised his hands high in the air. “My dear friends. We will not be attacked. Not now, not ever. The elders will meet in the morning and announce how we will dispose of this threat. You may go back to your homes and rest tonight as when the sun rises you will not be threatened by the flying demon or of Panora at all.”

The Morning After The Storm

The morning after the storm, when the elders announced their plans to defend Nuria and defeat the demons of Panora, the people of the town gathered in the great hall of the elders. Siam, Lila and the other elders were finely dressed and sat around the table discussing the final details of

their plan. When the last of the townspeople squeezed into the room Siam rose and faced the crowd.

“My dear neighbors, I am glad you are all here and are safe after the storm of the night. I did not want to say this then as it would cause you too much pain, but that evil storm was an ill wind from Panora and no doubt the wings of that flying demon added to the tempest that we all experienced.”

The crowd was shocked. The flying demon was indeed amongst us! Someone called out that they saw something dark and big flying over his house in the early morning light. Others said they heard a moaning in the darkness. Others said they smelled the foul stench of the demons breath! “It must be that flying dragon that breaths fire”, someone shouted out. Flying dragons were of myths and legends, but they all were convinced by now that it flew over their homes last night. They all agreed that the flying demon, a dragon of sorts, was here and that they were in more danger than ever.

Siam raised his hands and said yes they were in danger, but not anymore. “The elders have decided how to protect Nuria and all of the Moos.” The crowd hushed as Siam looked around at the anxious faces of the crowd. He then began to speak.

“Nuria has the finest and strongest soldiers of our lands. They are brave and have served us well for as long as we can remember. They have fought battles that many said we could not win. On the plains of Kaima when our grandfathers were young, 2000 soldiers of Nuria defeated 10,000 soldiers of the feared Kaimans. They have not lost a battle since.

But are they strong enough to battle Panora with its flying dragon? I have confidence in our soldiers. But we are fortunate that we also have something else in our favor. We all know the good fortunes and experiences of Tak, that land to our west. They flower with the richness that we dream of, although they don't have the responsibilities that we shoulder. They have the power that draws people to their lands and goodness in their hearts that we all share.

You have heard of Tasu and her experiences in Tak and how those experiences have elevated Tak to the position they are in today. Many of you have talked to Tasu and have been impressed by what she teaches. She is not a Nuriam, so some of what she says is foreign to us, and for good reason. But she is a courageous and powerful person that has offered to help us. As we gather here in this hall, close to our homes, Tasu is leading our soldiers to the island of Panora to defeat the flying dragon that threatens us every day. She will be victorious and our soldiers will come home in victory and never again will Panora threaten us again.”

The crowd gave out a tremendous roar of approval and shouted how glad they were of the elders decision, the march of the soldiers and the good fortune that Tasu was there to help them. Few noticed that Tasu’s husband and sons were not at the gathering. At that time Tasu was heading north to Panora and her family was heading south to the island of Sandon. Little is known of that island and less of what her family faced.

At That Time

At that time the word opinion had a very derogatory meaning in the Moo’s language. Most facts were steeped in tradition and considered the opposite of opinion. Opinion was reserved for an uneducated, almost a drunken response, to a question. It had no basis of correctness or even civility.

One day Janaw became sick with fever and sleepiness. Manu, Nuria’s doctor or medical man was summoned.

On looking at the young boy he proclaimed “Oh poor Janaw, he is taken with the fever of the sea. My heart is heavy as the joy of your life will soon be gone. Poor Joual and Tasu, will only have Duan after the next full moon”.

Tasu, her husband and other son were shocked. Manu did not look at the boy for more than an instant before proclaiming his learned opinion. Of course this was how it was all the time. Tasu saw decision and opinions issued all the time with little if any discussion. Their shock was not with the hast but with the outcome. It would do no good if Manu studied Janaw for hours or days, the outcome would be the same.

But Tasu, having that experience in the valley of Tak, was at unease. What if there was another way of looking at Janaw? The sun and moon beams that shown down on Tasu that day did have an affect, and it was good. She remembered how the strong sun and the pale moon each painted a different hue on her but together showed her a way forward. She remembered the story of how a man was beating his horse because he knew it was lazy and didn't pull his masters cart. But she looked in the horses eyes and saw the pain that emanated from the poor creatures hoofs. They were malformed and could never pull the loads demanded of him. The man just laughed at her and beat the horse more, convinced that the laziness caused the crippled hoofs.

Tasu went to the elders of the town she was in. The house of the elders was huge and decorated with most of the wealth of the town. A large round table with 6 chairs was at the center of the main room. In each chair sat an elder that formed the towns center of authority. What they decided was deemed good and was the final word for the land. They were called together at Tasu's request to discuss Manu's observation and Janaw's sickness. They were accustomed to these types of requests when distressing news was delivered; most seek intervention to keep it from their door.

“My dear elders”, Tasu said in a respectful put powerful voice. “My oldest son Janaw lies within your town, in a bed with fever and sleepiness. Manu's services were called for and he came promptly as requested. For that I am happy for he serves with the authority you have bestowed upon him. The good graces of Manu prevailed but he had the worst of news for me, my husband and my other son. Janaw, he said, will not see the light of

day after the next moon. Oh how saddened we are of this news. We have been in your town only a few months and took joy in the life of your friendly people and now this. The town seems like a dark tunnel I should not have stepped into. The town will take my son and leave us broken hearted.”

The senior elder, a man called Siam, was tall with large dark eyes peering out from behind his long white hair that flowed into an equally long white beard. He spoke directly to Tasu in a fatherly, caring voice. “My dear Tasu, we have our hearts burdened by many things but the loss of a son is one that bears heavy on our shoulders. I too have lost a son years ago to the very same illness that has befallen Janaw. When Manu gave us the news I wished that I could take that fever from my son as I take water from a cup. It was a heartache I felt for a very long time. His mother, my dear wife, still feels the loss in the morning when the sun rises until it sets at night. It is our burden and now you have the same burden. But you see, we are here. My wife and other sons and daughters are here. The joy that we have, yes dimmed by that unfortunate burden, is still with us. The tunnel you spoke of may be dark but there is always some light that will shine through”.

Tasu appreciated the words of Siam but did not come to the elders for solace. She came to question the wisdom of Manu.

“Siam, if your burden was something I could shoulder to relinquish your heartache, I would do so immediately but it is impossible to do so. In a month’s time the burden that Janaw will befall our family will likewise be impossible to relinquish. But that time has not come and the power to relinquish the burden may be at hand.”

“Tasu, your grief has overtaken you. Go back to your family and prepare for the burden you will take. We are here to help you through these times of darkness”.

“Manu has decided my son’s fate, as he has many others, including your son. As you know I have come from the town of Tak where an experience I had has shown me a way forward that gives hope for many.

The traditions that we follow, that our fathers and grandfathers have followed are indeed good and should be followed. Those traditions have come from the experiences of our forefathers. But are the experiences of our forefathers the only mother of our traditions? Are not experiences timeless in both the past and future?”

Siam was not prepared for the questions Tasu was asking. “Tasu, you know we have heard of your experience and are grateful that you have come to visit with us and share what is clearly a great good, especially for your beloved Tak. But I do not see what that has to do with the knowledge of Manu. As his news bears heavily on your heart, I am sure that is the reason for your concern. I say, please go back...”

Siam was interrupted by Tasu as she raised her voice with the confidence that she was known for. “Siam, I am with heavy heart as any mother would be, but my heart is also heavy with the certainty that Manu professes his opinion.”

“His opinion?” exclaimed Siam. At this the other elders started to murmur and express annoyance at Tasu and her questioning of Siam and the traditions of Manu.

“Yes, his opinion. He has not looked upon Janaw for more than a moment and decided, based on the tradition of issuing a judgement, what can and cannot be. Traditions should guide us. They do not bind us blindly to what has come before when we do not know what came before.”

This did not sit well with Siam or with the others. Tasu was questioning not only their traditions but the way they ruled over Nuria. For if traditions and judgments can be questioned, if they can be called opinions, could they be altered? And if so by others other than the elders?

Lilam, also an elder spoke up, “Tasu, you have come here and mock who we are. Men of greater authority have faced the sharp edge of our swords for lesser offenses.”

All eyes turned to Siam. Was this a threat? Siam saw that Tasu was not to be easily dismissed as a broken hearted mother. Lilam understood, as

Siam and the others did, that Tasu posed a threat that they may have to answer.

Tasu returned to her family and her suffering Janaw. He lay on a bed of straw with a fever that seemed to heat the small room they all slept in. Tasu, thinking of the beams of light from the sun and moon back in the valley coming from opposite sides, decided to take some cool water to Janaw's body.

"The cool water and the warm body will be like the sun and moon's rays. They will help Janaw move forward." Tasu also spoke at great length to him as she combated his sleepiness with her voice. She combated his lack of appetite with the scent and substance of sweet fruits. She gave him love when Manu would only give him pity.

It was only a week later that Janaw was strong enough to walk out into the sunshine. By the next new moon he regained his entire strength and tilled the small field he and his family tendered.

All this was not lost on Siam and the other elders, nor to Manu.

On The Night

On the night of the storm, Tasu did not sleep well. She had a foreboding feeling that change was in the air. All night long she thought of her husband, sleeping next to her and their two sons. Where was the next land they would go to? She knew they would have to leave Nuria eventually. Their fate was sealed ever since the meeting with the elders and the sickness of her son a number of years ago. There were other signs that it was time to journey on. She knew her influence here would only wane as time went on.

Tasu was awakened by the sound of heavy footsteps at the front door of their small cottage. She rose and opened the door to see the chief guard of the elders and some dozen soldiers standing in the faint light of

dawn. “You come with us now”, the chief guard said gruffly. He added, obviously at his superior’s instruction, “Your family will be safe”.

She didn’t have time to properly say goodbye to Joual, Janaw or Duan as she thought that it would only be a short time before she would see them again. She gently kissed Joual on his cheek and then put on her day clothes, boots, and heavy coat while the guard watched from the open door. She walked out of the hut into the breaking day hoping it would not be her last. On the way to the elders she felt she was being watched by all the eyes of Nuria, but they were safely asleep in their huts, assured of the elders protection.

In the elder’s hall sat Siam. He seemed bigger than when she saw him last. It was not just the heavy and colorful cloak that was wrapped about him. He seemed to hold the energy of the night storm as he stared down on her. She felt very small and weak. At his side was Lilam, much smaller than Siam, but he also seemed larger than her.

“Tasu, you have heard of the flying dragon from Panora and how he visited us this last night.” He didn’t wait for a response. “The people of Nuria must be protected from this evil and we have come here to plan how to do this.”

Tasu knew that the plan was already set and that she was part of it. Lilam spoke up, “You will sail with our bravest and fiercest soldiers to Panora and destroy the dragon. The ship is waiting now and you will sail before the sun rises.”

“I understand your concern and perhaps I could be of some help but I have not said farewell to my family. Surely a short delay to see my family and sharing some of your plans can make this a successful voyage.”

Siam spoke firmly. “There will be no delay; your family will be safe. The chief guard will tell of the plan on the way to Panora. We know you will be successful and we will be proud of the service you have performed for Nuria. We will celebrate your triumphant return and you will be reunited with your husband and sons.” There was no fatherly compassion

in his voice. There was no recognition of the separation that she faced. His eyes were cold and dark. For the first time since arriving in Nuria, she felt afraid and alone.

With that he summoned the guard to take Tasu to the ship.

As the ship sailed into the rising sun, Tasu looked back at Nuria and knew that she would not see that land again.

For Five Days

For five days the ship sailed north. The 30 soldiers did not include the chief guard. He stood on the dock without a smile or a wave, while the soldiers loaded the ship with provisions and weapons for the battle. Tasu wasn't told of any plans of how the flying dragon would be defeated. She didn't see how the few weapons that were loaded could fight a flying dragon. The soldiers that were on the ship were old and many could not keep from sleeping all day.

She accepted this fate and only asked for a sword to enter the battle with. The soldier Pirus said that there was no sword for her. Then tears filled his eyes and he asked that she forgive him.

“What forgiveness do you want from me”? asked Tasu.

Pirus said he knew the journey he was on was to be his last. All on board knew the days on this voyage would probably be among their last. He left Nuria knowing he would not return while you, poor Tasu, were misled into believing something that was impossible to achieve. All the soldiers knew they would not return. They were taken out of Nuria's prison and told that the only way to gain their freedom was to sail to Panora and fight to the death of either themselves or the great flying dragon. That is if they make it to Panora and if the devils of Panora didn't kill them first. Tasu was not surprised at what he said.

She said, “Pirus, I know our quest seems impossible but that has yet to be proved. Don’t despair at what you have not attempted.” She went on, “What was your crime that placed you in the prison of Nuria”?

“I was insincere in my allegiance to Nuria. My wife was growing grapes on the hillside which was very prodigious. The elders were very jealous as they must buy their grapes from other lands and then sell them to the people to make money in the exchange. Growing grapes was not allowed on Nuria. They were never grown there and we were told that if grown they could not be eaten or used to make drink, it would be for no good. The soil was not to be used for such purposes! At first we only grew what we needed and didn’t have any difficulties with the elders. But the harvest became good and others were thinking about planting grapes. The elders became very concerned.

I think it was Lillam that was most upset. It was he who brought me to the prison and judged me insincere. That was a year ago. I have not seen my family since then. I was told the only way to regain my freedom was to sail to Panora. We have no plan for battle. Most of us are not soldiers but fisherman or farmers and never battled before. The uniforms we wear were from old soldiers who have died and left to the army. I ask for your forgiveness because we cannot help you defeat the great flying dragon.”

Tasu knew that the men on the boat were not fighting warriors; that this voyage was not Siam’s grand plan to save Nuria; that she may not live to see her family again. Her fate now lies on the shores of Panora with their evil spirits, their endless dark caverns, and their flying dragon. But her concern was with her family. She wondered what have become of them.

The Island Loomed

The island loomed on the horizon like a black smudge of smoke from some devilish fire; clouds, gray with rain and mist swirled overhead.

The little boat lumbered forward, each wave bringing it and its crew closer to the island of the demons. Each wave another reminder of what Tasu and the other outcasts of Nuria faced. As the island grew from a smudge to an ink blot of a dark mountain and finally to a dense jungle with waves breaking on its ragged shoreline, Tasu kept thinking of Joual, Janaw and Duan. If she didn't question Manu, maybe she would still be with her family. Still together on Nuria.

But then Janaw may not have survived the fever and she would have lost a son. Would that have been better? Tasu didn't think long of what might have been as the wind began to whip up the seas, just as it was said it would around Panora. They quickly became treacherous. Was it even possible to land on the island? The skies grew dark as if the evil from the island reached out and enveloped them in its clutches.

The boat pitched and rolled. Try as he might, the helmsman had little control of where he could steer the boat. A thunderous crack was heard and the side of the boat rammed up against a rock. Water rushed in as the boat was lifted off the rock by another wave and tossed toward shore. Another crack and then another. The boat was being slammed from one rock to another on the way to the shore. Tasu and the rest of the crew found themselves awash in a sinking boat. The mast gave way, the sail, tattered and shredded, streamed into the howling wind. The mast landed across the deck as the boat seemed to splinter into hundreds of pieces on the last rock it hit before it was washed toward shore. Tasu was washed away as well as all the others. They found themselves fighting to stay afloat amid the broken ribs of the boat while being swept to shore to an unknown fate.

It may have been hours before Tasu awakened on the beach amid the scattered remains of the boat. The others were also on the beach; some had wounds from the ordeal of the storm, the rocks, the water and the remnants of what was at one time a boat. She saw that only a few weapons survived and hoped that they could try, as weak and tired as they were to at least

defend themselves. Defeating the demons and the dragons of Panora was more than they could hope for.

She slowly walked the beach and saw Pirus sitting up. His arm was limp at his side, broken by the falling mast, but alive and awake. The others slowly gathered around as the sun set in the west. The sea was alive with cresting waves and looked like it was laughing at the survivors and how it treated them. As darkness fell they huddled together in silence. There was no need to keep watch as they drifted off to sleep in each other's arms. They had no strength for battle as they awaited their fate.

The dawn came early and awoke the would-be warriors still huddled together on the beach. The demons did not descend upon them that night as they feared they would. Gathering what few weapons they found, they walked into the jungle to find some food and water.

They came upon a path wide enough for a few horses. The dense jungle was dark and forbidding, not an inviting stroll down a sunny lane. They decided not to walk on it but to follow it in the brush alongside. They could hide themselves easily and not be spotted on the path. Not long after they started, they heard the advancing hooves of at least two or three horses. They quickly hid behind the dense foliage and waited for the horses, or demons to ride past. It didn't take too long for three horses and, what they could see, three riders gallop quickly past. The brush was too dense to actually see the riders which was good because they felt safe in their hiding places.

No other horses, demons or much of anything was seen or heard for much of the morning. A small stream provided some water and a few berry bushes provided some food. The path ahead rose as it crested a hill and beyond that a faint wisp of smoke, perhaps from a chimney or camp fire, rose in the air; or maybe from a sleeping, fire breathing flying dragon. The demons were close at hand and soon they would see what they faced.

Tasu said she would creep up the hill and see what was ahead. Pirus and the others followed in single file through the brush alongside the path.

Only half of them had swords and the other half limped with the injuries from the beach landing. They were all determined not to give up but to fight, as instructed, and maybe by whatever grace that could be found in this land, make it back to Nuria in triumph.

She reached the crest of the hill and peered through the dense foliage to see a small valley below. She was very careful to keep hidden and walk lightly on the branches and dry twigs on the ground. She and her soldiers needed to keep their presence unknown if they wanted to surprise the demons. She followed the thin trail of smoke down from the sky, hoping it was from a camp fire and not the nostrils of a flying dragon.

She didn't understand what she saw. The smoke was not from a dragon or a camp fire but from a chimney that was attached to a little cottage made of straw and brable, a mud like material. There were other cottages, even bigger ones, in what looked like a small village. But what surprised her most, and what she couldn't understand at all, was the small children, in brightly colored garments playing in the courtyards between some of the cottages. They were laughing and playing and didn't seem to have a care in the world. Likewise, men and women were walking about as if this was a Tak village not a nest of demons on Panora.

Each of the soldiers peered down on the village in disbelief.

"It must be some sort of trap", Pirus said. "Demons have their own ways and can connive to make evil look inviting".

"But where are their claws and crooked backs?" one asked.

"We must be very careful and watch for the flying dragon. Maybe this land has captured us and our claws and broken backs have started already." replied Pirus.

"I don't think so" proclaimed Tasu. With that she stood up, standing tall above the brush.

One of the soldiers quickly drew his sword and was about to cut her down for revealing their position when Pirus grabbed his arm. "Wait, Tasu is wise and will save us all." Pirus said.

“You’re a fool, this is a trap and we will surely perish at her hand and never see Nuria again”.

Tasu said, “I will go into this town and present myself. Follow me now or wait here for the demons and dragons to take you away. These people are not demons as they will help us in ways we cannot help ourselves.”

No one understood why Tasu said this and then let her start her walk into the village. She was half way to the village when they saw the three horsemen appear from behind one of the cottages and ride quickly toward her. They gripped their swords and were ready to descend down to her side when one of the horsemen, only a few feet from Tasu, dismounted and walked toward her. With his out stretched arms he hugged her as an old lost friend. He then waved up the hill and invited all the soldiers to come down to the village.

Tasu And The 30

Tasu and The 30, as they became to be known, sat around the open hearth at the center of the village. Women attended to those that were injured, nursing and helping to attend to their wounds. Food and drink was provided so that all felt nourished. Children scurried about bringing baskets of bread, fruit and pieces of meat for all to share. Since they were all very hungry and tired, very little was spoken. They were grateful for this rescue as they were sure that this must be an oasis surrounded by the demons on the rest of Panora.

One of the horsemen spoke up. He was broad in shoulder and taller than the others. His cloak was of fine wool but heavy with the dust of a long journey. Beneath the dust the cloak was dyed with the colors of autumn,

dark reds, deep browns and pale yellows. His dark beard matched his equally dark hair. He spoke in a deep yet soothing voice.

“Tell me your names and from where you came.”

Tasu spoke first. “I’m Tasu from Tak. These others are from other lands but we all sailed from Nuria to slay the flying dragon of Panora.”

“And do you think you have the force and power to slay such a dragon?” ask the horseman.

It was clear that the three horsemen had more power and force than Tasu and The 30. Nevertheless Tasu said they were sent on this mission and that they must succeed for the sake of Nuria, their families and the rest of the lands of the Moos. She then asked who he was and why they did not fall into the hands of the demons.

“My name is Thermora. The two other horsemen are Camin and Hamid, and we have been on Panora since birth. This village is one of seven on Panora and is the smallest. We travel between all these villages, helping each and providing whatever assistance they may need.”

Pirus interrupted, “But what of the demons and flying dragon?”

Thermora stared at Pirus. His dark eyes seemed to look into Pirus’s heart and soul before he spoke in a low but forceful voice. “It is late in the day and you are all weary from your journey and the ordeal of the shipwreck, your swim to the beach and the walk to our village. Rest with us tonight. Your wounds need healing; I assure you the night will bring you peace. There will be time enough to talk of demons and dragons.”

With that Thermora called to the villagers to make room in their huts for Tasu and The 30. The three horsemen mounted and rode off into the darkening jungle as the last rays of the sun slipped below the surrounding hills.

Tasu, Pirus and two other soldiers were led to a hut by a man named Hem and his wife Shimora. They had one young son, called Young Hem and the hut was large for such a small family. The family slept in one room while the Tasu and the three others were in another room. Most of the other

soldiers were placed in small rooms or stables and barns. They were all treated well, given clean places to lie down and all fell asleep quickly.

Tasu again thought about her family as she drifted off to sleep. She dreamt of the five of them picking fruit. This was odd because there was very little fruit to pick on Nuria. As she picked a large apple all the other trees turned to stone. She was back in the gully on Tak and her son was lying on the ground dying. She had to find a way out to get help. There were no others around. When she did get out, the old man Lilam was there and just laughed at her until the sun blinded her. She woke up in a sweat as the morning sun broke over the hills.

Breakfast was eaten in the hut as the seven sat around the large main table. Shimora and Hem were very friendly and eager to talk to the strangers that just slept under their roof. They have been in this village since Young Hem was born having come from another village not too far away. The subject of demons and dragons was never mentioned and it seemed that they would not talk about them anyway. Tasu became concerned that there was many things she didn't understand and asked Shimora if Thermora was coming back.

“Yes, he will be back and I'm sure he will answer all your questions. Until he returns, we are pleased you are here and we will respect you as part of our family. Go meet the other villagers and walk among the fields. This is harvesting season. See the bounty that has grown in our fields. Drink from any of the wells you see. They all have water that is as sweet as honey. Tonight we will have a special feast to celebrate your arrival.”

Hem and Young Hem went off to the fields as most of the other men and older children did, as it was harvest time and all were needed in the fields. The women cleaned the huts, tendered to the few animals they had and prepared for the next meal. There was no doubt that the night's meal would be a feast.

Tasu, Pirus and the two others walked the paths of the village. The other soldiers came out of huts and sheds and joined them as they explored

the village and fields. They saw the rich fields lush with a bountiful harvest. Men, women and children were busily picking and pruning, raking and piling, carrying and bundling the harvest that would sustain them for the coming winter. There was no talk of demons or dragons, which were on all their minds. That would be an intrusion into what seemed like an idyllic landscape. Maybe this was all a dream, or worse. Maybe they were still on the beach after the shipwreck, dreaming; or all dead on the bottom of the sea and this was their reward, an endless dream. Maybe the demons already took their mind and soul and left them with this. They walked all day and then came back to the village square where a great hearth was built. Pigs and chickens were being cooked and fruits and vegetables were piled high, awaiting the arrival of The 30 and the villagers. It was a celebration.

They were expecting to see Thermora, Camin and Hamid but they did not come to the feast that the villagers prepared. Tasu and The 30 met all the other families of the village. The village was known as Panorade, the welcoming village. Everyone was kindly and knew how best to put everyone at ease. Even the soldiers that were injured were taken care of. Some were carried or placed on carts to bring them to the feast. Tasu was surprised to see even the most severely injured were able to sit up and partake in the feast. She thought that just being in this village was enough to heal all wounds.

Tasu saw the woman who was caring for a soldier that had a very bad injury to his leg. On the beach, Tasu thought that it was completely broken and such an injury could never heal. She thought of what old Manu would say if he were there: "Let him stay on the beach, he will rest easily until it is time for the burial." Tasu did not know why but she convinced the others to help him off the beach. She knew that he would never be able to fight the demons and dragons but that didn't matter. He was still alive and that was important. Now that she saw him, a smiling face illuminated by the flames from the hearth, she felt that Panora, or at least Panorade, was a place of healing.

“How did his wound heal so quickly”, Tasu asked the women, Kilam, who tendered the soldier. Kilam was old and had many wrinkles on her skin, her back was bent, her hair gray with age. But her voice was young. She seemed alive with a young person’s passion despite what time did to her body.

“It was not that bad, that wound” she replied. “I have herbs and leaves and they help me. But mostly, I find the strength to make the body well in the spirit of the ill. This man has a strong spirit. He does not want to leave. This land gave me that strength to heal, as it gives us all the strength for the harvest you are eating. We allow that strength to guide us in many ways. Much like the strength you found many years ago in Tak.”

This surprised Tasu, as she never met this woman before nor did she think anyone here would know of her experience at Tak. “You know of my experience in Tak?” asked Tasu.

“Oh yes, we have heard it many times from others that have come here. You have many followers and it is for that reason we are having this feast.”

This startled Tasu as the last thing she thought was that the feast was for her.

“I don’t understand any of this.” Tasu was now confused and angry that there were too many questions and no answers. “Why are you having a feast for me? And where is Thermora? And what about the demons and dragons? This place is not what we know of Panora. What others have come here and where are they? Are you some kind of demon that has taken over us?”

Kilam saw that Tasu was becoming upset. “Do not upset yourself, there is no reason for your alarm. You are not in danger and in time you will understand. For now, enjoy our feast as tomorrow is another day.” With that Kilam turned and attended to the others in need of help. This was the second time Tasu was told that she had nothing to fear but still did not understand this island of Panora.

Tasu looked out to The 30 and the villagers as they all gathered around the hearth. Food and drink were passed among themselves as if there was no end to the nourishment they all enjoyed. Was all this for me, thought Tasu. If so, why did they not say something? And who was in charge here? There seemed to be no elders or leaders other than the three horsemen, who were not even at the feast. It would be another night she would drift off to sleep wondering what Panora had planned for them.

For the next few days, Tasu and The 30 were kept busy exploring the village and the fields. They helped attend to the injured, although they seemed to heal without much intervention. Tasu saw Kilam a few times going to different soldiers and helping with their wounds. They spoke of helping the wounded but nothing spoken of the night of the feast. The days grew into weeks and they found themselves becoming part of the village. As time went on there seemed to be no need to ask the questions they had or at least there was no rush. Some soldiers even built their own cottage and started a small garden. Tasu enjoyed teaching the children about other lands and the ways of other people. She was pleased how well the children, and even the adults, listened to the stories she told, especially of her experience in Tak.

But she was growing restless and wanted to know more about Panora and the demons she was sent here to conquer. She was told the three horsemen would return soon and she waited.

Thermora Arrived In The Village

Thermora arrived in the village and went directly to see Tasu. He wore his usual heavy cloth coat and held in his mouth a pipe, smoke billowing from its open end. The smoke drifted up into the air and made it appear to be part of him. It was hard to tell where the smoke ended and the clouds began.

“I hope you and your men have recovered from your journey. The healing power in this village is strong. The harvest has been good and we are pleased to share it with our friends.”

“Yes”, replied Tasu, “The villagers have taken great care of us and the men are all well. I am amazed at how well they healed. Kilam has done us a great service. The villagers have taken us in like their own family. Some of the men have even started their own garden and work with the villagers.”

“I’m glad to hear you speak well of us. You yourself have plenty to offer these villagers and you can see they will accept anything you can offer them.”

Thermora didn’t seem concerned about the questions Tasu wanted to ask him so she spoke first.

“Thermora, we have been here many weeks and yet we have not heard about the dragons and demons of this land. You have not told us anything about this land and we are puzzled about the people and how they can survive amongst the demons. We need to know what we will face and how to overcome the demons and the dragons. For that is the reason we have come to this island.”

Thermora put his pipe down and stared into Tasu’s eyes and then gave a hint of a frown. “Tasu, you have come here with 30 men to defeat demons and dragons.” Yes, said Tasu. “And you expect that will save Nuria”. He said this while staring into Tasu’s eyes.

“Was it your idea to come here or were you sent by others.” Tasu thought this was a strange question. She had told him that they were sent here but what difference would that make? I’m here, she thought, why does he not answer the questions I have?

“Thermora, I was sent here to defend Nuria, and I don’t see how you are helping us in our quest.”

“A quest is it? How noble is that I wonder? But it doesn’t matter. Have you seen the demons and dragons that you know are here?”

“We have not” replied Tasu, “and that is why I am asking where they are.”

“Tasu, there are demons in many lands, and maybe even flying dragons, although I have yet to see such a creature. But I tell you this, you have come to the wrong place to find them here. There are no demons in this village, and I doubt you will find them in the other villages on Panora. But demons exist in forms you may not recognize or in forms that disguise their true nature. I’m sure Lillam has convinced you that your quest is noble and that your soldiers are the bravest of Nuria. But you know better than I what is true. He speaks with the tongue of a man and a soul of a demon.”

“You know Lillam?” asked Tasu

“I knew Lillam and I knew Siam. They have led many to lands far away and I fear that they have led you to a quest that you cannot fulfill.”

“But what of the flying dragon that swoops over the huts on Nuria? What of the storms that shroud Panora? Of others that never return from Panora? Of all the stories and battles?”

Thermora took up his pipe and puffed a large cloud of smoke that drifted over Tasu’s head. “See that smoke? It is over your head but you know from where it came and therefore does not concern you. But for others who may come to this room now it may appear that the smoke always floats over Tasu’s head. How true is that? It is as true as the words of Siam and Lillam if they utter such thoughts. And yet that is how it is in the lands of the Moos. Nuria, Tak and all the other Moo’s lands are filled with such ideas and beliefs. The elders of these lands only fulfill what the Moo’s expect. Yes the smoke over your head is real but the concerns of many are not.”

Tasu didn’t completely understand what Thermora was saying and so questioned him further.

“But why do Nuria and the other lands fear the demons and dragons of Panora if they are not here?”

“To answer that, you must look into the hearts of the men of Nuria. What is it that gives Nuria the power and influence over the other lands? They are defending all from the demons of Panora! These men can conjure a simple storm into a vision of flying dragons. It suits them well to do so. The whole of all the Moo’s lands are such afflicted. You, Tasu, are not so inflicted. And that is why you were sent here. Your experience and your questioning have been a powerful influence and have led you to discover many things that are good in this world. The people of this village, the people of Panora, have also discovered such good. They are prosperous and their children and grandchildren will prosper unlike the people of Moos. Theirs is a dying land.”

This disturbed Tasu as she has never heard such talk. The history and future of Tak seemed eternal. They would continue for generations to come, and yet she herself saw through her own experiences how very little changes from generation to generation. When difficulties arose, they simply did what their ancestors did and accepted the fate that came. In Panora she saw children much more playful, learning new ways to play, to plant and to live. The farms were much more bountiful, not just because of the rich soil and water; it seemed that the people themselves gave more life to the land and in turn the land gave life to the people. The work of Kilam drew life from the earth and healed the sick.

“It is good that I have seen this and I have learned much. I should go back to Nuria, Tak and the other lands and spread this news. For all Moos need to hear about Panora.”

Thermora drew a long breath on his pipe and the smoke filled the room with its sweet aroma.

“You cannot go back to Nuria nor to Tak. What you have seen here will remain here. You said this is a wonderful place, almost a magical place, and that many of The 30 have become villagers. You should also become a villager here. What you were searching for in your travels is here. In your

way you have defeated the demons and slayed the flying dragon of Panora. We welcome you to Panora.”

“What do you mean I cannot go back? I must! My family, my children! I can tell everyone of the great land of Panora so all can share.”

Thermora saw the fear and bewilderment in Tasu’s eyes. He said in a comforting voice, “Tasu, you are a good person and know that you will understand that you cannot return to your lands and to the Moos. All the villagers here and on all of Panora have come from Nuria, Tak and other lands. They were all sent here for various reasons but have found that they did not want to go back. If you or anyone did go back this land would be overrun by people like Lilam and Siam. They will not permit Panora to cease being the land of demons and dragons.”

“But I do not want to stay. I need to leave as soon as possible.”

Thermora stood up and now in a firm voice responded, “You cannot leave this island as you will cause it great harm if you did. In time you will understand that the land of the Moos have no future. Your future is here and that of your 30 followers.” He left her sitting while he gathered his coat and left the hut.

There was a tear in Tasu’s eye as she sat trying to understand what she had heard. Yes Panora is a wondrous place. She could understand wanting to stay here, as many of The 30 did. The land and people would give her all the things she needed. But were her travels in search of such a place as Thermora said? In many ways the old traditions of Tak were burying the Moos and she did find that the new experiences she had, made her happy and fulfilled. But she couldn’t understand why she couldn’t return to her own land. She could share her experiences and then all the Moos could enjoy such happiness. Then she thought of Joul, Janaw and Duan. What would become of them? What did become of them and were they still in Nuria?

Book 2

Sandom

Joual Heard Tasu

Joual heard Tasu get up and open the door to let someone in. It was not uncommon as many asked for Tasu's help or advice, even in the dark of night. He felt her warm kiss on his cheek and thought he would see her in the morning; she would tell him how she solved a problem with a neighbor or comforted a sick child. When the sun rose and she wasn't there he became concerned. But it was not long before another knock on the door came. The soldiers didn't take long to order Joual and his two sons down to the water and onto a boat waiting at its edge.

Lilam was waiting there and approached Joual.

"Tasu has sailed on a great mission to save Nuria. She and 30 of our bravest soldiers have sailed to Panora to defeat the flying dragons. I objected but she insisted that she go immediately as she saw the great flying dragon flying over your hut. She told me she only feared for you and her sons and made me promise that I send you, Janaw and Duan to Sandom for safekeeping in case the dragons attack Nuria. It was with a heavy heart that I saw Tasu sail off without saying goodbye to you but I must keep her wishes and send you to Sandom as I promised. Take what you need from your hut but make haste as you should leave as soon as you can so that I can fulfill Tasu's request. I wish you a good voyage and look forward to the day when we are all together again celebrating Taus's great victory."

Joual thanked Lilam for looking after them and protecting his family. He returned to his hut briefly to gather some clothing and reminders of their time in Nuria. He took a cloak that Tasu wore as he was certain she

will ask for it after her latest adventure. Janaw and Duan likewise took some clothing and some fruits they could eat on their voyage. They quickly returned to the waiting boat and climbed aboard. They said little to each other as they believed Lilam was doing them a great favor by carrying out Tasu's wishes. As they sailed quickly away, Joual saw Lilam walk up the bluff to where Siam was standing. They exchanged glances and then waved at the departing boat. He could not hear what was being said as the wind picked up and pulled at the canvas sail. The boat lurched forward and out to sea in the direction of Sandom.

"It went well Siam." Lilam told Siam. "I feel we will not see the flying dragons for a long time. Tasu will be successful and Nuria will be saved. She will be honored more than she has ever been. We will owe her a great deal."

"Perhaps you are right, my good friend Lilam. But I wonder about Joual and his sons. In time they will wonder if their sacrifice was worth the price paid. Will the grief for the loss of a wife or a mother stir them like Tasu was stirred? Will they also question what we have wrought?"

"You worry too much Siam. Tasu is already known as an adventurer in her own land of Tak. The whole village celebrates what she discovered and yet it has not changed our world. We still provide the protection they need and they still provide us with our needs. If it were not for Nuria, and the very brave Tasu and our soldiers, we would still be at the mercy of the flying dragons of Panora. The demons may not have been defeated, but all the lands of the Moos need not fear that island of desolation; more the reason to keep clear of it, even if you could survive the storms and waters surrounding it and try and land there."

They watched the boat with Joual and his sons sail over the horizon. In a few days they will land on Sandom and sometime after that Lilam will come personally to deliver the sad news of Tasu's death.

Tasu Told Pirus

Tasu told Pirus what Thermora had told her. Pirus was relieved that they were not needed to fight dragons or demons. He did not think too much about not going back to Nuria and his home. Life on Panora was good. As other soldiers were finding out, they could have a very pleasant life here. Maybe they could start a new family. There were certainly enough women who seemed interested compared to what who they left behind. In any case, he was in no rush or desire to return to Nuria.

“But what of your wife? She will surely miss you and the news of such a place like this would bring her great joy” asked Tasu.

“I was in prison for many many months and my wife has been alone all that time. It is good that I have left so that my crime does not burden her on Nuria. That is why I came to Panora, so that she can live in peace.”

“But your crime was not a crime” exclaimed Tasu. “Don’t you see? Look around here in Panora. Is it a crime to grow grapes? Is it a crime to grow more than what you need? Are not the excess grapes shared and traded for the bread and fish others have? If it’s not a crime here why is it a crime in Nuria?”

“Because it is!” Pirus replied. “You know the elders, especially Siam and Lilam, have told us what is allowed. There is no questioning of the right way. We all know the right way, just like our fathers and forefathers. There is no need to question what we know. We have heard stories from you and sometimes they do not make sense. But since you said it and the people of Tak said it was good, it is. But now here in Panora, the land of demons and dragons, you say things that cannot be allowed in Nuria or Tak. It can only be talked of by demons. Is it that we are becoming the demons of Panora? If that is so I will dive into the raging waters and sleep at the bottom of the sea.”

Tasu understood Pirus as she understood most of the people she knew on Nuria, Tak and the other lands of the Moos. They could never understand the people of Panora and how different they were. And yet, Pirus and The 30 were more than content not to leave Panora. Their lives on Panora are like demons to the Moos. No one proclaims something is good unless it is demonstrated it is. The elders, if Thermora and the other horseman can be called elders, guide and advise the villagers rather than proclaim the edicts that the elders of Nuria do. Tasu was confused as to how to tell Pirus and the other soldiers that the demons were not of Panora but that lands of the Moos already contained demons that they have let in. She had to return to Nuria and Tak and the other lands to tell these tales to free them from the demons they harbor.

Tasu pleaded with Thermora to let her go back to Nuria or Tak or to any other land. Thermora would hear nothing of that. If Tasu had any unhappiness on Panora, that was the only one. Everything else on the island was ideal. She missed her husband and sons but as time went on even that loss was less of a burden. If she believed what Thermora was saying about Siam and Lillam, her family would not be on Nuria and she would not be able to find them now. Still, she wanted to go back and be reunited with them.

Thermora was not an uncaring man. He could see that Tasu was not as happy to stay on Panora as The 30, the other survivors of the boat that came to destroy the dragon. Over many years he saw others that came to the island and eventually accepted the fact that they could not go back. After some time they were grateful to him and started a new family on Panora and never spoke of the lands they came from. Tasu was not like that and this upset Thermora more than anything else.

It Was Many Months

It was many months after The 30 arrived when Camin was walking on the beach where the boat from Nuria was wrecked. Tasu happened to be there also as she liked to look out on the sea. The sea was always turbulent and it seems that clouds always hung low along the coast. Tasu approached Camin who looked like he had his own problems to solve.

“Camin, you look out on the sea expecting it to lift your spirits. What troubles you that Panora cannot relieve your sadness?”

“Tasu, you know Panora is my home and the friends and family here provide the happiness that I have. There is no reason why I should want to leave yet I have heard what you have asked of Thermora. It has made me wonder if I could find happiness in other lands. I find it sad that you wish to leave but find it sadder still that Thermora prevents this.”

Camin was wondering what she would say if she left Panora with him. He became very fond of her and tried to see her as much as possible on his rounds to the villages with Thermora.

“This should not be your concern,” replied Tasu “I understand what Thermora has said and he is protecting all of Panora and is probably right in what he says. Your way of life here is different than the other lands and it will be lost if Siam and Lilam had their way. I only wish that I could help the other lands to see Panora without destroying it.”

Talking to Camin reminded Tasu of her longing to see Joual. They were about the same age and had the same dark eyes and broad smile that first drew her to Joual. Even his voice sounded like Joual’s. If she had to stay in Panora, she thought Camin would be more than a good companion. They were both still young enough to find love again. He could share her cottage now, as she lived alone after moving out of Hem and his family’s cottage.

“Tasu, there may be a way for you to return.” Tasu was surprised that Camin thought that much of her problem.

“Thermora will never allow this, even if I could sail off this land.”

“You think you know why Thermora will not let you leave but there is another reason.”

“What is the other reason? inquired Tasu.

“Thermora has a sacred oath with Siam. They are of the same family and were arm and arm in many battles to defend Nuria. They were like brothers and both grew in influence and in time became elders of Nuria. But there was a difference between them as you can see now. Thermora showed compassion while Siam showed cruelty. When they ruled together there was a balance. But it did not last. The compassion in one and cruelty in the other grew. Like two great limbs on a single tree, when a great wind hits, it splits the trunk in half. Thermora wanted Nuria to be what Panora turned out to be. Siam used his cruelty to keep what was. Siam had more supporters, especially Lilam, and eventually exiled Thermora to Panora. At that time there was little here, and because of the storms and seas it was the source of the stories of the demons. Thermora has said he was born here. What he means is that Panora was born here when he came. He does not think of his life before Panora and talks little of his life on Nuria.

Siam is very clever in the use of stories. Siam does believe that Thermora is a demon and so the stories grew. There is no one to challenge him and if there were, they would find themselves on the shores of Panora, battling the demons that they were told lived here.

The oath Thermora took is that no one will ever leave Panora nor will there be any trade with any other lands. The oath Siam took was that Thermora broke his oath not only would Siam send his army to slay Thermora it would slay all the inhabitants of Pandora.”

“So if I leave Panora, not only will Thermora be slain but all the inhabitants”? asked Tasu.

“According to the Oath, yes. But I think times have changed since the Oath was taken. Thermora and Siam are getting old. Their time on this earth is less than the time they have been here. Today Panora can defend itself against any attack from Nuria or any other. It could not do so when

Thermora came here. Thermora may not believe that but even if he does, he would not wish to inflict a great conflict here. Siam also knows that attacking Panora, either winning or losing, may be more of a problem for him. Panora is needed as an enemy, not a defeated enemy. Change is not in Siam's thoughts.

But if you leave and search out your family and share your experience at Tak like you always have you will sow the seeds of other Panoras. The future does not grow from fallen weeds as their roots can never be destroyed but from the seeds of a new plant that is stronger and taller than all the others. That is what you can offer. You do not need to destroy Siam and Nuria, they will do it themselves. They are already praising your name for their own glory. If you return and say nothing of Panora other than Nuria has no need to fear the dragon, you have accomplished what they expected and they cannot harm you. There is no need to send a real army to Panora or to slay Thermora. You will be free to live your life as you choose."

Tasu thought long on what Camin said. "But will Siam trust me not to reveal the truth of Panora?"

"Siam's hands are bound by the stories he has told. Your future is not in his hands. What you know of Panora will not change what you say to others. What you say to others will change them into what Panora is."

"And what of you Camin?" asked Tasu.

Camin knew what she was asking and said, "I have no other desire than to see you leave Panora." But added, "I would not be telling the truth if I said I did not want to go with you as my heart desires to. I have seen our lives together ever since I saw you coming into our village with your warriors. If it were only the two of us I would flee tomorrow. But if I went with you I could never explain how we met or how much you mean to me. That would destroy us both. And you must search and find Joual and your sons. In that I am sure."

They embraced, knowing that it would be their last embrace and that Camin was right. He could not leave Panora with Tasu but part of his heart would always be with her.

Tasu Was In The Field

Tasu was in the field alone when Thermora rode up on his aging horse.

As he dismounted he said, “Camin said you had some important information for me, Tasu. I’m getting as old as my horse so I hope my ride here will be useful. Let me sit”

“Please sit. I’m sorry for calling for you as I know you are busy with all that goes on in Panora but I thank you for heeding my plea.”

Tasu was a little hesitant to bring up the subject of her leaving Panora again but needed to tell him of what she and Camin talked about.

“Tell me Thermora, do you think other lands could be like Panora?”

“Men are men” Thermora said. “They are what they are for many reasons. If those reasons don’t change, men will not change.”

“That is good to hear” replied Tasu. Behind his tired eyes she saw the look of a man that said that same thing many times.

She told him what Camin proposed. How she could leave Panora. How Panora would remain safe. How Thermora would remain safe. How other lands would have a chance to be like Panora. How it will all be for the better.

Tasu was ready to hear all the objections and fears that Thermora was ready to recite; he would not trust Siam, let alone Lilam, to let her alone; he could see great hardships thrown at Panora when Nuria’s army came; he would see Tasu slain in the middle of the night; he would not, could not, let such a plan go forth.

Thermora sat still for a while. He then took his pipe out, filled it and lit it so the smoke drifted up into the clear sky. He then lay back and said. "I wish I could go with you."

A Month Later

A month later the time came for Tasu to leave Panora. She didn't expect that Thermora would agree to "Camin's Plan", as it became known. Since he did, she suspected that it was his plan all along but Camin took all the credit. She was surprised that most of the people of Panora that heard about her leaving helped her prepare. As far as Panora was concerned this was not a secret adventure. Tasu saw the joy in the eyes of the people as they offered their help. It was not that they wished to be going but more of a wish that their life on Panora was spread to other lands. They were resolved to stay in the shadow but be the seed for other lands.

Only Tasu and two young brothers would be leaving. The brothers were living alone as their parents died a few years earlier. They didn't have any other family on the island and were young enough to start a new life elsewhere without strong ties on Panora to pull them back. They were able sailors and fisherman so their journey off the island would be a success. The three of them would sail from a cove on the far side of the island where the wind and currents would take them safely and quickly to a trading settlement about a week away. There they would blend into the other traders. Tasu would board a bakre to the town of Tripic and then start searching for her family who may still be on Sandom. The brothers would travel to another town and begin a new life. They were trusted to never mention Panora, Tasu or the voyage they were about to begin.

When Pirus heard that Tasu was finally able to leave Panora he was saddened. He was happy for her but they had become good friends and for that he was sad to see her go. He decided long before that he would not go

back, even given a chance. They would often discuss this but Tasu always said she was going to leave. Still, he was surprised when she told him that she was going.

He was happy that she was going to find her family and just as happy to learn that no news of them surviving would be sent back to Nuria. The only thing Nuria will know is that the Dragon was slain by the brave soldiers and that they are now heroes. That will make their families proud and may make their loss more bearable.

By this time they were already heroes and that celebrations started shortly after they left. It was told that a great battle was fought and the soldiers all died in their successful defeat of the flying, fire breathing, house destroying dragons. As it turned out there was more than one dragon and the nest had to be destroyed. Tasu was said to be the one who destroyed the nest but she too perished in the battle. A small statue outside the hall of the elders was erected and was dedicated to her by Siam and Lilam only a month after she left Nuria. The statue and the story of the brave soldiers who gave their lives so that Nuria and the rest of the lands could survive drew pilgrims to Nuria and quickly rivaled Tak's celebration of Tasu's experiences.

Tasu And The Two Brothers

Tasu and the two brothers, Belam and Panlam, were seen off on their voyage by Thermora, Camin, Pirus and Kilam, the healing woman. One to find her family, and two to start a new life. They were the only ones who ever left Panora as no one ever left after them. All three understood that nothing of their lives on Panora would be said to anyone once they sailed. Once they pasted the inlet a fog quickly shrouded them from the view of those on shore. The three in the boat also lost sight of Panora as the

wind carried them far offshore and they began their journey to their new home.

They sailed for three days and landed on Tripic, a small trading and fishing village north of Panora. It was not unusual to see small boats with only a few people on board sail into the settlement so they did not attract attention to themselves. They quickly made their way to the market and blended in with the others visitors and the people of Tripic. Belam and Panlam searched for any boats that needed fisherman or were heading to lands further to the north. Tasu asked for boats headed toward Sandom. These were not unusual requests and many people offered to help them find their way. They only spent four or five days in Tripic before they found the help they needed. On their last day together, Tasu thanked the brothers for their help and wished them well in finding their new home.

“We wish you well Tasu. We will always remember you in our hearts and our tongue will not betray what we have promised.”

Belam was the older of the two and Tasu knew that he would never reveal where they have come from. Panlam, was younger and seemed more interested in searching for a new home but she wondered if he too could be trusted with their secret. It did not matter. They were all off Panora now and will soon be many miles apart without any trace of where they have been. They agreed that they would not know where they will be heading or what boat they would be on. This would be the last they would see each other. The last night together they shared a meal and it was then that Tasu noticed that Panlam was writing something in a journal.

“What do you write of?” asked Tasu.

“Just some thoughts and some things I remembered” replied Panlam.

“It is not of us and Panora, I hope.” Tasu was afraid that whatever was written could be used to betray the vow to Thermora and then Panora would be destroyed.

“Don’t worry, Tasu. Panora’s secrets, and yours will never be revealed in what I write. Although your stories are already written in many minds none are written for other eyes. That may change in time but for now you should have no fear.”

At daybreak Tasu boarded a bakre that was headed west and might call on Sandom. It was not a usual place to stop but the captain said that if there was reason to stop he would. They were going to other settlements first and may pick up a reason to go to Sandom. It was the only boat going in that direction so Tasu climbed on board.

Tasu left the two brothers in Tirpic and she was sure they would be off on their own voyage shortly. It was a few days later when they did leave Tripic for a fishing village. Panlam had his journal with him for the rest of his voyage.

Sandom Rose In The West

Sandom rose in the west just as the sun was rising in the east. A good sign thought Tasu, thinking of the two rays of light that graced her face so many years ago in Tak. By mid morning the rolling sea carried the boat into the harbor where a waiting crowd on the small village dock wondered what this bakre would bring.

Not many boats and fewer bakres call on Sandom. It is a poor island as most of the visitors come from Nuria, either willingly or unwillingly. The island is not as forbidding as Pamora but it is an island that Nuria uses for its own purposes. The most frequent visitor was Lilam from Nuria. For some reason he liked coming to this place, maybe to spy on the people who he sent there.

The captain of the bakre had cabbage to sell and so that is why he landed on Sandom. Tasu was grateful of this but did not want to draw

attention to herself by insisting they stop at Sandom. She thought that the sooner the captain forgot about a passenger who left the boat in Sandon the better. When the boat was tied up to the dock she quickly made her way off the boat and disappeared into the crowd on the dock. Walking the paths around the harbor she saw the small shops and inns of Sandom. It was not a prosperous place and there seemed to be no joy in the faces of the people she saw. How different this place was from Panora. She walked out of the town not knowing where she was headed. But she was trembling beneath her cloak at the thought of her being close to her family. She would start to ask people she met if they knew of Joual. In her excitement she tripped and fell in the road not far from the harbor.

A young man walking by offered to help her and reached out to take her hand. It only took a moment's glance but he recognized his mother's face immediately. It was four years since Duan last saw that face. Although the stories of her heroic battle were legendary he always hoped he would see his mother again. To see her on the road not far from his home brought tears to his eyes and the thought that this was only a dream.

"You are not dreaming, nor am I. I have come a long way to see your face and to hear your voice. Time has fed your growth as it fed my age but time has brought us together again. We should be grateful."

Duan led Tasu to a small hut on the outside of the settlement where he lived with Joual, Tasu's husband. The years were not kind to Joual and his sense of loss at losing Tasu was heavy. It seemed Sandom saddled everyone with this heaviness. They embraced for a long time without saying anything. For Joual it was like a dream he had so many times before. Was this real? He could not tell.

Tasu finally spoke and said all she wanted was to return to her family and that is what happened. She wanted to know where Janaw was and if he was well. Joual gave her the good news that he was living in a nearby hut with his wife and newborn baby. They made Sandom their

home. They did not want to leave, as each had a hidden hope that she would return. That day finally arrived.

The Dragon On Panora

The dragon on Panora was no longer a threat, just as Siam and Lilam had said. The festivals that celebrated this event and other feats by Tasu held little interest for Tasu, Joual and their growing family. Tasu never told Joual or anyone else the full story of Panora just as Thermora requested. She saw no need to. Her return added to her legendary life, something she did not cherish. Siam and Lilam heard of her return and, just as Camin predicted, did nothing but praise her good fortune. The celebrations and festivals were too wide spread to stop as they had their own reasons for being. Many people enjoyed these celebrations and they did lift their spirits. Tasu did not participate in any of them as they were celebrating a part of a life that was not hers.

Tasu and her family left Sandom for another settlement where she could tend to a small plot of land. Her sons and grandchildren helped and they grew to understand how Tasu's life was changed by her experiences in Tak. Unknown to themselves, they lived as Tasu lived on Panora. They did not need the festivals and celebrations that other Moos thought were important. Tasu's great pleasure and satisfaction was in knowing that she planted the seeds of the future while the lands around her held hollow celebrations that only served to keep the weeds growing.

Book 3

Hope

It Was All Good

It was all good and they sought to destroy what was good.
They knew nothing but the false stories of those from other lands.
My voice is silent but there is hope that she lived on.
The story must be told but the lands of the dying it will not change.
It will pass from generation to generation.
The fields were bright and full of the fruits of our labor.
The sea was our wall and it served us well.
I knew her and she knew me.
We lived on in hope.
They are dying yet prosper on false hope.
They celebrate what they do not understand.
What they do not understand will die with them.
I have loved her but we parted.
I have hope that goes on.
That the seed will flourish.
I have hope.

Book 4

The Seed

Stories And Tales

Stories and tales of Tasu flew with the wind around the land of the Moos. They floated like clouds casting their shadows on all those below. Each year they billowed and grew more detailed, the celebrations more elaborate, the traditions more entrenched. Tak's celebration known as Kalunamoo grew but the celebrations on Nuria were larger. Small settlements and towns all had their own festivals and celebrations as very few Moos did not hear of Tasu and her adventures. Many of these places laid claim in some way or other to the great Tasu, either as being part of the tales or having people who were related to her. They laid claim to the riches that were bestowed upon them from the adventures of the woman from Tak. Their lives were enriched by her experiences. Of that there was no doubt as the celebrations did indeed make opportunities for profit for many.

The lad Simran made an annual voyage from his village to Tak for the Kalunamoo festival for more than ten years. He came with his mother, father and brother when he was young and when he was about 20 years old he and his friends came by themselves. He had a following and even held a small celebration in his own village and became known as a great follower of Tasu. Everyone who had a question about Tasu went to Simran for advice. The advice, this lad had, was the retelling of the tales that were becoming more numerous by the month. Simran never met Tasu but he did have a burning desire to see and talk to her. He wanted to search for and finally meet Tasu. When his parents died he had his chance to leave home, and he did.

He started his journey with a few friends but they slowly left him after traveling months to settlements with no sign of Tasu. They heard more fantastic stories and tales in these places each one more fantastic than the last. Not only did Tasu slay the flying dragon of Panora by riding it up into the clouds and thrusting her broken sword into the beast's eye, she guided the beast to the ground by flapping its wings with her feet. In another tale, Tasu swam from Panora for five days to the isle of Sen to escape the demons of Panora. Tasu seemed to escape death in many, many ways. In all the villages and settlements he visited, he saw how the people admired Tasu and held celebrations in her honor. Those celebrations were deemed good and were enjoyed by everyone.

He traveled to Tak, Nuria and Sandom but never was able to find Tasu or her family. In his travels he heard that she left Sandom a number of years past and went to a little visited settlement north of Tak.

Simran was going from town to village to settlements to huts looking for Tasu. After a year he was getting weary and was losing any hope that he would ever see Tasu. On a bright spring day, walking along a road between villages he saw a path that lead into a dense brush. He decided to follow it for no other reason than it seemed to be an odd place for a path to be. The brush was not too dense and the path was cut cleanly and led to an opening in a meadow with a few houses and huts. It was there that he finally met Tasu.

“It gives me great pleasure to meet you as I have come a long way propelled by the stories I have heard and the people I have met.”

Tasu didn't get many visitors as her reputation was sufficient to satisfy the interest of many. It didn't seem important to see or talk to her directly as it was deemed good just to know the tales. For Tasu, she was satisfied to talk to those who didn't know any of the stories as it made what she said easier to understand.

“You have a great following, even I have strangers coming to me seeking advice on how to celebrate the great Tasu.”

“And what advice do you give them?”asked Tasu.

“Well of course the best way is to journey to Tak and partake in the celebrations there. Try to find and follow the path that you found. The canyon is long and deep and must hold many stories. But many cannot make that journey so they celebrate in their own villages. I try to teach them the stories I have heard but there seems to be so many more than even I can remember. That is why I have come to you. Nuria has a very big celebration and even has a statue of you. The stories I have heard there, I repeat at all the other villages and towns I visit. The old elder Lilam gives long and respectful speeches of how we must be grateful for your service and dedication.”

“And what does Siam say?” asked Tasu.

“Elder Siam died a few years ago and so I never heard what he has said but all the people of Nuria hold him in the highest regard.”

Tasu didn't hear of Siam's death but that was not unusual. News of people's deaths go unannounced. But it did make her think that Thermora may also have died as they were the same age. Panora was safe as it was still known as a place of demons although no flying dragons ever flew from there after Tasu defeated them.

“And so the celebrations are what the people seek.”

Tasu had a forlong look on her face. She did not often think back on her life as there was too much to look forward to. Her grandchildren played out in the field in the rolling meadows that reminded her of Panora. When strangers did visit she would welcome them much like she was welcomed in Panora. There was little talk of tales and stories of dragons and demons. The seeds of her life were all around and yet what she was known for was the celebrations in the towns and settlements. She wondered where the blossoms of Panora were.

“Do they grow grapes on Nuria?” asked Tasu.

This was an odd question thought Simran. Why would she care about the grapes on Nuria?

“No, of course not”, replied Simran. “They would no longer grow grapes on Nuria than the sun should rise in the west. There are no grapes on Nuria, only what is sold by the elders. But why do you ask?”

Tasu never forgot Pirus, one of the men she was with in Panora. He was imprisoned because he grew grapes on Nuria in defiance of Siam. She wondered if his wife grew them in secret or was persuaded by the elders not to grow them.

“I thought that might have changed after all these years.”

“That is a strange question,” replied Simran. “But I was asked the same question sometime ago by a man in a village east of here. He also wanted to know about grapes in Nuria.”

Tasu asked if he knew the name of this man.

“If I remember right it might have been Camlan or Samlan or something like that.”

Simran told her that he met him one day out in some field. The man used to fish but gave that up and started a small farm with his wife and daughter. They lived by themselves but were friendly enough, welcoming him into his small home. He was different than most of the others he met as he didn’t seem interested in the stories he was telling about Tasu. He was not interested in the celebrations at all and even found pleasure in questioning some of the stories that he had heard. He knew about your adventure in Tak and it did help him in his life although Simran didn’t understand how, especially since he never participated in the yearly celebration.

Tasu listened to Simran and smiled. The seeds may be spreading slowly, even as the celebrations spread.

“So you are here to hear the tales of Tasu.”

“Yes! I need to know what new tales to tell my friends so they will know what is good and so they can tell their friends.”

“And they will not know what is possible without my stories?” Tasu seemed annoyed.

“Yes, you know that these stories are good for all Moos. They have the authority of all the traditions and will serve us well.”

“And there is no questioning of these tails? No one is asking for anything other than more tales?”

Simran was confused. “Why would anyone question the tales, all they needed is more tales and adventures of Tasu to add to their celebrations. I have traveled for a long time to come and meet you and to hear more details of the adventures, not to be confused by your words.”

“My words count for little in what you desire. It would be better you stay and live here and forget what stories you have heard. There is room for you as others have found.”

“I cannot stay here,” exclaimed Simran. “I have family and friends and my task is to spread the stories of Tasu, not to live in this small village which seems like a very odd place for the great Tasu to spend her time”

The words of Simran reminded Tasu of her meeting with old Siam when her son was dying. There seemed little interest in anything other than repeating what he already thought was good. He could not see the joy and happiness that came with seeing things in a different light; and how the ritualized celebrations only blinded him more.

Maybe it was not in his heart or any Moo’s heart to see what she, the people of Panora and some of the people she had met, saw and felt. Maybe they did have to walk through the canyon as she did to see that there are many ways to look at life. She was saddened by the searching of Simran to hear more stories. It is not the stories, thought Tasu, it is so much more. She was reminded of what Thermora said. The Moo’s will not find a home for the next generation when they clutch a past that strangles them so. Like weeds in a field, they may flourish now but will fall to stronger growths of others if the seeds are planted. She looked out in the meadow and saw her grandchildren and the children of the others who lived there and smiled.

Simran left and returned home to tell of his adventure in finding Tasu. It was the start of another great Tasu tale.

Afterward

Inside the book *Tasu's Tales* was an odd page titled Book 3. My opinion is that it might have been written by Panlam, one of the brothers who left Panora with Tasu. It could also have been written by Camin who stayed on Panora. It is possible that Panlam was the source for the entire tale as his journal may have been the story that was translated but Book 3 seems more of an original source. Book 4 may even have been written by Tasu's grandchildren.

Tasu's Tales is obviously not a complete history of the Moos or even their place in the lives of the people at that time or place. There may be other books and tales yet to be discovered that may complete the story. Until such time we can only speculate on the fate of the Moos.

Kalunamoo, the sailboat, sails on calling on new ports and adventures. Herb Cohen continues in collecting obscure books and stories. Maybe our paths and the paths of Tasu will cross again. Maybe the seeds will continue to flourish.

Ka-luna-moo (Kā-lōna-moo) n. 1. The name of a festive day celebrating the fortunes that can be achieved by embracing opposing viewpoints. 2. from lost South Seas folk tales embracing opposite ideas 3. Literally, sun moon and sea.