

**ONCE UPON A
TIME IN BRAZIL:
The pirates of Vila
Velha and other tales**

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GRAPHIC DESIGN AND REVIEW

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Dedicate to you, dear reader.

John, the Knight of the Castle of Light

In 1898, Brazil was still passing through the integration of former black slaves in society. Slavery had been abolished in 1888, but the discrimination and lack of inclusion for former slaves were still great.

Mary was a former slave. At the end of this terrible Brazilian past, this woman's life has not progressed much. She was evicted from the farm where she was born and worked all her life. Without a choice, she and her son went to live on the streets of the city that would eventually become the heart of Brazil, Rio de Janeiro. Mary was black and extremely thin. However, she was able to survive for some years on the streets thanks to a secret she possessed. Whenever she wanted to do something good, light would emanate from her. She

didn't know but she's actually an Amazon of Light. Her son was the greatest hope a woman could have to continue to live. The power coming from her heart to protect her child, was so great that she could turn stone into bread so long as she won't see him hungry. They didn't steal. They were not criminals. They did not hurt anyone. They just survived day after day in the warm streets of Rio de Janeiro. John, Mary's son, was a little boy. He was also born in the same farm where they used to live. The boy's father was their master but John is an illegitimate child so he had to sleep in the slave quarters with his mother. Even in a difficult time in his life, John was very happy to have Mary as his mother. She always made him happy.

Mary and John lived in the streets Barra da Tijuca. During the day, Mary would always go look for a job. As a cleaner, laundry woman, cook, or any honest job she could have. However, she was black,

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so nobody wanted her to be seen, especially in the manors or reputable establishments.

One day, they passed by a beautiful street. At this location, there was a huge confectionery. From where they were, one could see the tasty pastries served inside. John's eyes were filled with desire to indulge himself with what he saw inside.

“John, we can't have these sweets. We can't have them, but thank God, we don't have to go hungry,” Mary told her son.

“I'm sorry, Mom.”

Mary hugged her son. Hand in hand, they continued to walk. Those surely were difficult times for emancipated slaves. In the industrial society, they were marginalized by the white elite.

Unbeknownst to them, a group of traders in the area where Mary and John lived, was dissatisfied with the large number of blacks living in those streets. They got together and decided to end the issue. One night, an armed group attacked the former slaves. That time, Mary was seated on the road along with John. They were watching the full moon shining in the dark sky. There were no clouds. The stars were also shining brightly. Then, a shooting star crossed the infinite sky. Mary told John to make a wish.

“I want to be with my mother always!”

Mary smiled and looked at her boy.

At the beginning of the street, a group of hooded men with wooden sticks appeared. One of them approached a black man who was sleeping on the street and suddenly gave him a blow on the back. The man groaned in pain.

In the confusion, the blacks responded. Many knew Capoeira so they fought the bunch of white men. Meanwhile, Mary grabbed John's hand and started running. She did not know where to flee. The only thing she's sure of was that she had to protect her child. They ran as fast as they could. However, to the blacks' surprise, the hooded men had guns. Shots began to be fired in the air. Mary ducked, protecting her son by hugging him.

Suddenly, mysterious lights appeared from all corners of the street. Nobody

saw where they came from. Mary did not know either. These mysterious rays started hitting the group of white men. One of the white men, however, managed to get close to Mary. He hit her with his wooden stick as she hugged John tightly to protect him. Immediately after, a beam of light hit her aggressor but soon after, she was shot in the back by another member of the group.

John's eyes filled with tears. He can't bear losing his mother that way. The boy closed his little hands and looked to the heavens.

From the sky came a beautiful winged horse. It was white and had a woman on its back. She had very fair skin and short hair. She wore a white dress completely covered by starfish. She also had another one on her head as an ornament. There was a slight touch of golden glow about her. She then pointed at the man who had

fired the gun at Mary. From her hands came a ray of light. John did not understand what was happening. The white men ran without knowing what was hitting them. It was then that John realized he was the only one who could see the woman.

He began to pay more attention around him and saw that there were other women on winged horses. Who were they?

The short-haired woman approached John and his mother. He looked scared but she gently smiled at him.

“Don’t worry. The men are not seriously injured. Before long, they’ll wake up again.”

John looked bleakly at his mother.

“I’ll take you and your mother with me. The worst has not yet come to her but I feel her light decreasing more and more.”

The woman approached the wounded Mary. She spread her hands and light came from it again. This time, it was directed to Mary’s wound. There was no immediate improvement and Mary was completely unaware of what’s happening around her.

Another woman, with long red and curly hair, approached them.

“Melina help me put Mary on one of our horses.”

“Let me take her on my horse. Take the boy in yours.”

The dark-haired woman held the boy’s arm and led him to her horse. Then, she helped Melina carry Mary in order to be transported by the winged horse. After doing so, the woman with a starfish-covered dress helped John on her horse. She rode the horse herself afterwards. Then, a bright light shone on the sky. The winged horses began flapping their wings and flying towards it. Scared, John clung tightly on the woman.

“Don’t be afraid. I will protect you and your mother.”

“Are they perhaps angels from the sky?”
John asked himself.

As they flew higher, he felt he was getting closer to the stars. He could feel happiness despite everything that happened. John then looked at the horse next to the one he’s riding. The red-haired woman was riding it along with Mary’s unconscious body. Melina was holding her.

John did not know why but he felt protected. From above, he could see the city of Rio de Janeiro becoming smaller and more distant. When he looked forward, he saw that they were flying towards the forest.

After flying for a relatively short time, they began descending on the ground. The forest was very dense. The thick

bushes made the area appear darker than it really was. The winged horses have now landed on the forest. John looked curiously around the forest.

After landing, they continued their journey until they reached a huge tree. It was really great. Both the width and length were quite extensive. The dark-haired woman dismounted her horse and walked closer to it. When she touched the trunk with her hand, it opened. All of them entered.

Inside, John marveled at what he saw. There's a forest within the forest itself. Yes, John was confused by everything. At the center of this new forest, there was a huge castle made of sand. His face glowed as he looked at it. When they reached the castle, the horses were left outside. Mary was carried into one of the rooms. Inside, the women, called Amazons of Light, had directed the

energy emanating from their hands to the injured Mary. Life seemed to return slowly to her face. The bullet was not lodged in the wound. Then they stopped. John noticed one of them had features similar to the indigenous Brazilian people.

“Will we be able to restore her light?” one of them asked.

“I will give my life for this. Don’t let anything happen to this woman or child,” the woman in the starfish dress said. “I believe it will go well during the night. We’ll come back tomorrow and take turns to emanate light to Mary.”

John looked scared. Will they be able to heal his mother? Then, a woman with blond hair and short stature interrupted the group’s conversation.

“We saw the Renegades prowling the surroundings today,” she said.

“Be alert everyone. We can’t let them invade the Castle of Light!” Melina said.

“John, you must be hungry and have a lot of questions. Come with me! I’ll take you up to the dining hall and explain everything,” the woman with a starfish dress said.

The boy smiled and followed her. They strolled through the corridors of the huge sand castle. John saw that it had several rooms. A bit later, they arrived at a large hall. On one of the sandy walls were several paintings of women whose faces were painted. However, among the row

of portraits there was a picture of a man. He had very pale skin and long black hair. He's wearing an armor. John found it curious that it's the only male portrait on the wall.

After going through the hall, they finally arrive at the dining hall. In it was a huge table of glass. Over a hundred people could eat their meals on it. The chairs were made of bamboo and straw. The woman led John to a chair. When he sat, she left and came back shortly afterwards with a plate in her hand. She sat next to him and gave him his meal. John looked at his meal with bright eyes. It even included a very tasty looking lemon pie. When the woman handed him a spoon, he wasted no time and immediately started eating.

“You must have several questions about who we are,” the woman said.

John gave her a nod.

“I must first say my name. My name is Olga. I, like your mother, am an Amazon of the Castle of Light, or simply Amazon of Light.”

He stopped eating and listened carefully to what the woman was saying.

“All the happiness generated by humanity emits a form of energy. There are women who can channel that energy and turn it into light, when it is necessary to do something good for someone else.”

The boy was filled with pride that his mother is one of them.

“We are able to find others like us through the Castle of Light but we can only do so when an Amazon uses her power frequently.”

For the first time since he came, John spoke.

“That’s how you found my mother just now?”

“Yes, lately she began to use her power more often.” “I’m happy to have helped my mother.”

Olga smiled at him.

“I will protect you and your mother with my own life.” John’s heart was filled with warmth.

“Will my mother be okay?”

“Certainly, I’ll give a little bit of my light to her regularly.” John still had doubts.

“I have three questions.”

“Ask and I’ll answer if I could,” Olga answered gently. “Why was It he only one who could see you when you were attacking with the lights?”

“I see, you’re a smart boy. When an Amazon treads here at the Castle of

Light, it becomes invisible to other people. You probably have the gift to be a Knight in the Castle of Light. They have the function of protecting our castle but are difficult to find.”

John felt proud with the news.

“Who are the Renegades? I heard you guys talking about them earlier.”

“Good question. They are builders who followed the path of evil. Builders are people who are born with the amazing ability to build amazing machines powered by steam. The Renegades are people who have this talent, but use it to do evil.”

“Why do they want to get into the castle?”

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“If they get their hands on our source of light, they could use it in their inventions. Thus, they would be invincible.”

The boy had something else to ask.

“Why is there a picture of a man in that huge room?”

The woman hesitated to speak for a moment. Her eyes filled with tears.

“He was the noblest Knight of the Castle of Light.”

John would have continued to ask about the matter but Olga stopped him.

“You’ve had your three questions, now eat. If you need me, just call my name.”

After finishing his meal, John took a bath in a huge porcelain tub. He thought it’s funny that the sand is not coming off the wall. For this, he had a possible explanation. The Castle of Light is completely enveloped by magic. That’s the reason the Renegades want to invade it.

After taking a bath, John slept in a bed next to his mother. He watched her while she slept. Her breathing was weak but he was glad she survived. John felt like he’s in a dream. How could there be such a magical place like this?

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As days passed, Mary continued receiving doses of light, primarily from Olga. Olga knew which path John should follow and had lately been thinking of having a serious talk with the boy.

“John, there’s something I have to tell you.”

“Yes, Miss Olga.”

“You have the gift to become a Knight of Light and I will prepare you for this.”

The boy’s heart swelled with pride again. He was recently just a poor villager from the center of Rio de Janeiro. Now, he was

going to become a Knight of the Castle of Light.

Between intervals of Olga's affairs, she had prepared classes for John. Besides learning the functions of a knight, he also had to be literate in Portuguese. His first lesson was on how to use a sword. At the garden beside the Castle, Olga was waiting for him with two wooden swords in her hands. Once he arrived, she threw him one of the swords. Immediately, she attacked. The surprised boy just defended himself the best he could.

“The enemy will not have mercy. Don't be kind when fighting. You may lose your life for it.”

That lesson was difficult for the boy. Olga attacked him with ease. All the while, he wondered what he could do to

defend himself to the enemy. After the lesson, he went to the dining hall. There he met Melina.

“Hello, John! Tired from your first class?”

“Yup! Miss Olga is very skilled. It really looked like she wanted to attack me.”

“She has to do that to prepare you. Olga does not want you to have the same fate as Alberto.”

“Who’s Alberto?”

“Haven’t you ever seen the only male portrait in the hall among all the other Amazons who have died?”

“On second thought, yes, but Miss Olga doesn’t really want to talk about it.”

“Well, I don’t know if I should tell you...”

“Please, I won’t say you told me.”

“Alberto was the bravest knight of the Castle of Light and Olga is still the best Amazon. He protected the castle against the forces of the Renegades. One day, we were attacked but this time, The Renegades had very powerful weapons. All the Amazons couldn’t fight anymore. The two of them were the only ones left defending the castle.”

Melina stopped for a moment.

“We have a special weapon. We call it the Supreme Force of Light. If we use it, we can defeat any enemy we have, however, we will pay for it with our lives.”

The boy held his breath and continued to listen carefully.

“Olga was injured and had fallen to the ground. Alberto dragged her to safe place then led the enemies a bit away from where they were fighting. The enemy used a bomb to cause a large explosion. Everyone died in that explosion including Alberto. Because Olga did not use her secret power, Alberto’s life was sacrificed. Even if she was a bit far, she witnessed his death.”

Tears streamed down Melina's face.

“We thought Olga's light would never be as strong as it was until she saved your mother and you.”

After hearing everything, John can't help but cry next to Melina.

A few days later, Olga came to him hastily.

“Come with me!”

She pulled his arm and started running. John soon realized they were going

towards Mary's room. He could not believe his eyes. His mother was sitting on the bed with her eyes open.

“John!” Mary exclaimed and the boy ran to hug her.

“Mother, for so long, I wanted to hear your voice again!”

“Thank God I can still continue to take care of you,” she said, sobbing.

“Do you know where we are? You won't believe it when I tell you!”

“Olga has already told me everything that happened,” she answered, smiling.

John turned to Olga but her white skin was paler than it was and she had to hold herself up against the wall.

“John, help her!”

“Boy, take me to the basement.”

“Underground?”

“No questions! Just do as I say!”

John did as ordered. Olga leaned on one of his shoulders. With difficulty, they went down the stairs to the basement. There, she directed him where to go. They entered a dark hallway which had a door at the end. When John pushed it

open, he was surprised. There was one bottle inside. From inside it came the brightest light he had ever seen. Olga walked with difficulty towards it and rested her hands on the light. Quickly, her health was restored.

“All the happiness generated in the world produces such a great energy, which no man can imagine. It is stored here in the Castle of Light. Some women, however, can still use energy dispersed in the atmosphere, which is us, the Amazons.”

Olga looked deeply into John’s eyes.

“However, when we use the Castle’s light, we may get side effects.”

“Are you going to be okay?”

“Maybe.”

A year later, Olga helped Mary and John train. John learned how to use a sword and a shield while Mary learned how to control the power of light. The three practiced daily. Until one day, the Renegades attacked.

“A huge group of Renegades are attempting to invade the castle!” Melina told Olga.

With a big hoot, Olga summoned a group of winged horses. The Amazon rode the winged horse to protect the fortress of sand.

“Stay here! You’re not yet prepared to fight,” Olga ordered.

The Renegades were great indeed. Three of them seemed to lead the group. A man with long blond hair, another with short black hair, and a woman with short red hair. The Amazons attacked them with all the strength they possessed. Olga was the strongest among them. Five of the Renegades were knocked by a single light emission from an Amazon. The Amazons clearly had the upper hand in the battle as they attacked mounted on their winged horses. This was so until an armored tank appeared in the middle of the Forest.

The tank gave off smoke and steam. When it fired, many of the Amazons of Light were injured. The three leaders could be seen operating the tank from the small window it has. The Amazons started to lose hope as the number of the

injured increased. At this time, Melina was trapped.

One of the Renegades pointed a gun at her. Desperate and losing hope, she was unable to emit light. It all seemed lost when the enemy was hit by a sword on the shoulder. It was John. Both mother and son could not stand by and watch so they decided to help. However, even with the glimmer of hope that emerged, it still seemed hopeless for the Amazons.

John fought his best and was able to defeat about ten enemies. This infuriated the Renegades. Fifteen of them trapped him and one of them managed to get his sword. Another one pointed a gun to his head. Most of the Amazons were wounded and couldn't help. Olga did not have to think too much for what she was about to do. It was the right time. She decided to use the Supreme Light.

The light from the explosion left the Amazons blind for a second. When everything settled, their enemies were on the ground. Then, Olga's dead body fell on the dry leaves of the forest. John immediately ran towards her feeling the same emotions he had when he thought he had lost his own mother. Meanwhile, the three leaders of the Renegades took advantage of the situation and tried to enter the castle but Olga's desire to protect was so great that it created a huge protective barrier around the castle. The remaining enemies fled the site, frightened.

John cried inconsolably. He stood beside Olga during her funeral. She was dressed in a beautiful dress covered with real flowers and laid on a wooden table in the garden. Her hands were joined on her chest and an apple was put in between them. A wreath also adorned her head. After the Amazons sang songs of farewell, the table was set on fire. John

swore at that moment, he could see the Olga's image meeting the Knight of Light that she loved so much, the same man whose portrait hang in the main hall. John knew she was going to a happy place.

For John, it was certain. He was to follow the path of being a Knight of the Castle of Light and would protect Mary, the other Amazons of Light and fulfill the role that Olga had entrusted to him.

The Lost Princess of the Kingdom of Algarve

The story starts on the year 550 AD at the Kingdom of Algarve. King Augustus II had two children: Peter and Louis. The first was handsome, brave, and gallant, but has always been greedy. The second was very shy and introverted, but he possessed great wisdom. All princesses, even the ones from distant realms, wanted to marry Peter but he was waiting to meet the most beautiful woman of all.

Next to the kingdom was a forbidden forest, where magical beings lived. One day, Prince Peter decided to venture into the forest to see what's inside. He mounted his horse and rode it to the forest. Upon arriving, his couldn't believe his eyes. Magical beings really

did live there. There were unicorns, centaurs, and elves among many others. What caught his attention in particular was a beautiful young woman. Her beauty was so great that he could not stop looking at her. She had, however, huge black wings on her back.

Gradually, Peter approached Manoela, the beautiful young woman with wings. He discovered that she was a fairy and, overtime, she became his friend. He had intended to make her his wife but the Kingdom of Algrave was unaware of the enchanted kingdom. It was a risk to take a fairy home.

Manoela was of utmost innocence and was not aware of the true intentions of her human friend. The bond between them was very strong and it was inevitable for them to fall in love. After some time, Manoela became pregnant. Peter was banished forever from the magical kingdom, named Alcoutim, and a huge curse fell on him.

Hopeless to meet his beloved again, Peter did not tell anyone about Manoela or the Kingdom of Alcoutim. The king was very worried about Peter's depression. As time passed, the sadder the prince became. Soon, the days of the curse were approaching. The weather was cloudy and black. That week, it rained non-stop. One day, everything seemed darker than the last. It was the night when the thunder began. The gates around the kingdom closed and the people hid in their homes. Nobody knew what was happening but it surely wasn't something good. At midnight, the church bell rang and the full moon appeared in the sky. Figures could be seen in the clouds which sent everyone panicking. Cries were heard from all parts of the Kingdom. It was the day Prince Peter's child was born.

That time, Peter was woken up by his father's scream. He took his sword and rushed to help the old king. He broke the door down and saw a woman with pale skin, red eyes, sharp teeth and supernatural strength holding his father up by the neck. Louis also came through the door and saw the same scene. They couldn't believe what they're seeing. Vampires were invading the whole kingdom.

“Your Highness, you didn't think the prophecy would not be fulfilled did you?” the woman said, laughing.

Peter could not believe what was happening. Yet, he had no choice but to fight. He wielded the sword in his hand and attacked the vampire.

The sword pierced her belly and the vampire had no choice but to drop the King.

“That will not be enough to kill me.”

“That was not my intention.”

At that moment, Louis drove a stake into her chest. Before becoming dust, Peter held her neck and stuck his sword in his belly. He fell into his brother’s arms. With all his remaining strength, he told him his story. Peter closed his eyes and rested forever. At that moment another woman came through the window. Unlike the first, who was blonde, the second one had black hair.

“What have you done to my sister?” she said before letting out a scream.

“A new curse will be upon this Kingdom. The next heir to the throne, 15 years from now, will be taken by me.”

The kingdom was in chaos as it was attacked by vampires. With a whistle, the black-haired vampire signaled that it was time to leave. After some time, all the vampires left. When his father woke up, Louis told him what had happened and what Peter said. At that moment, they knew that they had to find the child born that night and protect the next heir.

The kingdom's population declined from the barbarian invasion, but it wasn't enough. The legend about the curse reached the people. Everyone knew that the next heir is lost and that the next member to be born into the royal family will be surrounded by a curse. The people in the kingdom became insecure with the possibility that one day, they

will be invaded again and just like the first time, many innocent people die.

In the year 570 AD, young Edgar was anxious about his appointment as Loyal Knight of the King. King Augustus II died five years ago, and his son, Louis, took over the throne. That day, the castle was decorated for the appointment of Knights. The Knights were handpicked by King Louis, who appointed them by placing his sword on their shoulders. However, one of them would be chosen as the Loyal Knight of the King. Unsurprisingly this award was given to Edgar because he was the bravest and the most loyal among all the other Knights. That same day, King Louis talked to Father Emile.

“Father, I’m worried about my son, Michael. The fifteen years is almost complete.”

“So the legend of the curse is true, my son?”

“Yes, Father. I fear for his life. I’m desperate. I don’t know what to do to protect him. I named Edgar as the King’s Loyal Knight, because I know he will fight with all his strength to protect the prince.”

“Pray, my son, that God will deliver the security and the prosperity of this kingdom on the hands of the prince.”

Soon, the King ordered Edgar not to let Prince Michael out of his sight. The Knight did as he was told. That day, the King ordered all the Knights to be on their guard. Everything was calm during the day but when night came, it started

raining. The people remembered that night almost 20 years ago. All of them hid in their homes. Panic gripped their hearts. The nightmare is about to be repeated.

On that same night, Edgar slept at the door of the prince's room. Nobody expected someone to go through the ten-meter high window but when Prince Michael looked outside, he saw a woman's figure flying towards him. She was extremely beautiful with black hair, pale skin, and sharp teeth. The second prophecy would materialize. As she approached the window, the prince opened it.

“Come, my prince. Give me your hand and we'll be happy forever,” she told him.

Enchanted by her beauty, he gave her his hand. At that moment, Edgar was woken up by voices inside the room. Hastily, he opened the door.

“Prince Michael, don’t go with her. It’s a trap!”

The woman roared in laughter. She held the prince’s hand and led him away. Edgar immediately attacked her with his sword. The woman swiftly grabbed a three-pointed dagger hanging around her waist and hurled it towards him. The dagger hit Edgar’s arm. With the Knight wounded, the woman took the prince with her.

Still bleeding, Edgar ran to the King and told him what had happened. The other Knights reported that no one else was attacked or taken but the prince. Feeling doubtful, the King called for Father Emile. Both planned to rescue the prince

but to do so, they needed the help of the true heir.

Early the next morning, the three rode their horses towards the woods. Edgar did not have details about the mission, but he was sure it would help bring the prince back. They travelled until they reached a place they couldn't ride their horses in. King Louis walked slowly. At that moment, a huge centaur appeared before them.

“What’s a human king doing in our kingdom?”

“Lagos, noble centaur, we’ve come here to speak to Princess Amelia. We need her help. A curse has befallen us.”

“You come here only when you need help. Have you forgotten what your brother has done?”

“I remember, but my child’s life is at stake. I’ll pay whatever price is needed, even with my own life.”

“I see your beautiful heart King, I give you permission to enter and talk to the Princess.”

The King motioned the other two to follow him. They followed the Centaur until he reached a tree. The trunk opened the all entered. Inside was an extremely beautiful and magical world. The Kingdom of Alcoutim has not changed much since Peter was there, except no more fairies were living there. A unicorn came to meet them.

“King Louis of the Kingdom of Algarve,
welcome to Alcoutim,” It said.

“King Monoceros, it is a great honor to
be in your presence. This is my advisor
and my loyal Knight.”

“Everyone who has a good heart is
welcome in the Kingdom of Alcoutim.
Princess Amelia will be glad you came.”

Edgar had then realized that the legend
about their kingdom’s royal family was
true but he did not exactly understand
how Princess Amelia could help in
finding Prince Michael. At this time, the
beautiful princess approached the
strangers. Edgar was struck by her
beauty.

“King Louis, for what reason have we received this unexpected visit?”

“Princess Amelia, the second curse has just been fulfilled.”

The princess looked surprised.

“Then, it’s time to leave?”

Edgar interrupted the conversation, and protested.

“Young Princess, such beauty cannot go with us. It would be very risky.”

“She’s the daughter of Peter and Manoela. The true heir and the only one who can save Prince Michael,” the priest said impatiently.

“We all feel the same, but this is necessary,” argued Monoceros.

“If it is necessary, then I’ll protect the princess with my life,” said the noble knight.

“I am grateful for your courage, noble knight but I hope you don’t need to sacrifice your life.”

“Knight, please follow the princess. She needs to pack for the trip,” King Monoceros said.

The two went walking across the kingdom. There were small houses, where elves lived; bigger houses inhabited by centaurs; and small pastures for the unicorns. The homes of the fairies were almost uninhabited. The only person who still remain there was Princess Amelia.

“These houses were once inhabited by fairies before I was born. As I am half human, they could not take me to their shelter. You see, I don’t have wings, which is a cause of grief for them. I grew up here, the centaurs and unicorns always watched over me and helped me control some of the powers I inherited from the fairies.”

“And your mother?”

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“Unfortunately, the pain of giving birth to a human child was too great. During childbirth, she succumbed and died.”

“Excuse me for asking. I’m sorry for that.”

“No problem, noble knight. Now we will work together to rescue Prince Michael.”

The two continued to walk, until they stopped in front of a tiny house for elves. Princess Amelia gently knocked on the door.

“Princess Amelia, what honor to have you here!”

“Arak, hello, I need your help with something that is valuable.”

“Don’t tell me that the time has come to depart?”

“Yes, dear friend. Tell me the price and I’ll pay you.”

“The price is for you to return safe, Princess Amelia.”

The elf pulled a very shiny stone from his pocket.

“This is the most beautiful jade stone. It will be useful in case you need to trade for something during this mission. Please Princess, come back alive. Do consider

the legend about possibly retaining your own wings.”

“I believe in the legend, little friend. A fairy and a human’s child will be born without wings but with an act of bravery, that child will gain his own.”

“Remember, dear princess, the price of this gem is to return alive.”

“Don’t worry little friend, I’ll come back and reign for many years in Alcoutim.”

Still smiling, the princess gestured to Edgar to follow her. She went to the old houses of the fairies and picked up objects, amulets, and some books. After packing up, they finally joined King

Louis and the others to discuss their plan to rescue Prince Michael.

“Prince Michael was certainly taken to the castle of Anastasia,” Aljezur said.

“But the only person who can lead you into the castle is Princess Amelia,” argued Monoceros.

“Why is she the only one capable to do so?” Edgar asked.

“She inherited the power of the portals that fairies have,” King Monoceros answered.

“But to do that she needs to be near the castle and to get near it, there is only one way. We would have to be transported by a dragon,” King Louis said.

“And that’s not all. We also need the help of a wolf from the Alcateia Valley in the West and a mermaid from the waters of the South,” Father Emile said.

“What exactly do we need of them?” Princess Amelia asked.

“At the lair of the vampires, the wolf would help you to easily infiltrate their castle. The mermaids own the forbidden jewel which the wolf needs so he won’t be dominated easily by the forces of darkness. It would not be easy to gain their support, however.”

“This mission is very dangerous. The smaller the group, the easier for you to move around. Therefore, the noble knight will take charge of protecting the princess, the princess will open the portal to enter the castle, and the priest will kill Queen Anastasia of the vampires. She was the one responsible for the kidnapping of the Prince,” explained Monoceros.

It was almost noon when Edgar was sent back to the Kingdom of Algarve along with Princess Amelia. He has to prepare his armor, sword, and other equipment they would be needing during the mission. The kingdom was tumultuous and noisy due to the kidnapping of Prince so the two tried not to get that much attention. For this reason, the princess used a black hooded cloak. They went into an old house with yellow walls and two windows. Upon entering, as Edgar was preparing his armor, Princess Amelia saw that his arm was wounded. She rested her hand on it and a bright wave of light was emitted. His arm was healed.

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“This is one of the powers I inherited from the Fairies.”

“I am eternally grateful to you, your Royal Highness.”

Suddenly, an old woman entered the room and stared at Amelia.

“What a beautiful lady you brought, my son!”

“Mother, she is a friend who will help us rescue the Prince. You know I can’t forgive myself for what happened.”

“Don’t beat yourself up so much. It’s not your fault.”

The princess looked at him reassuringly.

“During the incident 20 years ago, my father protected us during the attack. I was very little then. He had closed all the windows. However, a beautiful woman called me from outside so I opened a window. I recognized her as Anastasia. With an evil laugh, she broke my father’s neck. She only stopped when her sister was in trouble in the castle,” Edgar explained with downcast eyes.

“I’m sorry for what happened. Together, we will stop her evil plans and save Prince Michael.”

“I hope he is still alive and has not been transformed into one of them.”

“No more sad conversations. Have lunch with us!” Edgar’s mother interrupted.

They all sat down at the table. Two more children joined them. After eating, Edgar took his best armor, sword, and shield. He said his goodbyes to his family and went along with the princess.

When they reached the Kingdom of Alcoutim, the others are already waiting for them. They knew that this was not an easy task.

“Be careful princess,” said the little Arak.

“Take care of her Knight,” Aljezur said.

All others also wished good luck to the group and helped them put their bags on their horses. Princess Amelia, Edgar, and Father Emile each had their own horse. They departed in the early evening and travelled until dawn to the Cliff of Dragons.

“We must be careful when speaking with the dragons,” Amelia said as she descended from her horse.

Edgar quickly grasped his shield and sword. Then, from above, a huge fire breathing dragon descended. The princess and the priest hid behind a tree. The brave knight faced the dragon alone.

“You won’t be able to defeat me with just that, noble knight,” the dragon said with a smirk.

The dragon opened its huge wings and roared with fire coming out from its mouth. Edgar protected himself with his shield and proceeded to attack. He climbed on top of a rock and tried to attack the dragon from the side. The dragon, however, flew and let out more fire.

“You humans are arrogant, thinking you’re king of wisdom,” the dragon roared.

It flew down and caught Edgar in his claws. It flew far away on top of the cliffs. From there, the dragon let out a great roar.

“We need to go after them,” Amelia said.

The two immediately mounted their horses. They rode up until where their horses can reach. From there, they continued on foot. When they reached the top of the rocky mountain, they saw a group of dragons in a circle.

“The human may be able to gain something if he defeats our King, but if he loses, death is his only alternative,” one of the dragons said.

Princess Amelia and Father Emile saw Edgar preparing to fight inside the circle. He was still up against the huge dragon he was fighting earlier. All the other

dragons chanted the huge dragon's
name.

“Enoch, Enoch, Enoch!”

A noise sounded and signaled the start to the battle. The noble knight attacked the dragon, which in turn showed his huge sharp teeth after letting out fire. It was exciting. Though Edgar was bloody and burned in some parts, he still continued fighting. Enoch fought too but his pride as a dragon didn't let him lose.

“Tell me what you came here for, I'll grant you your request if you bring me the heart of a beautiful maiden,” Enoch said, realizing that the battle will not end so easily if they continue.

“I’d rather fight to the death than make such an atrocity.”

“I see you have a beautiful heart, young knight. Giving your life in exchange for the heart of a young maid is a great test of goodness. This fight will not be necessary. Consider the battle done and tell me what you want. I will speak my price.”

With the situation changing, Princess Amelia and Father Emile approached. The three of them told Enoch what they were doing there.

“I’ll take you to Anastasia’s castle, but in return I want the Dragon Eye she uses to see beyond her kingdom.”

“We agree with the price, Enoch, King of Dragons,” Amelia said.

“Leave your horses here. The Dragons can take care of them until we get back.”

They did what the Dragon King said but Edgar did not feel good about being a knight without a horse. The sadness was visible in his eyes.

“You have a beautiful heart, young knight. I already told you that. Don’t think of yourself as a knight on a horse. Instead, think of yourself as a noble knight on a dragon. Your father should be proud of you, not many hold this title.”

With hearts uplifted, Edgar sat near the dragon's head, while the princess and the priest sat down near the wings. It's everyone's first time to ride on a dragon. The sensation of flying on a huge magnificent being was magical. The view below is so small and the feel of being as big and powerful as a dragon was something elusive. At noon, they stopped for lunch with some food they brought from the land of dragons. They had chicken and some fruit. The dragons especially prepared the food for the three humans. After eating, they continued their journey westward. Soon, they would reach the Alcateia Valley where they will be asking assistance from the wolves.

The wolves were independent beings and never went near the vampires' lair because of the possibility of being captured and controlled. The group, having a dragon on their side, thought it would be easier to convince a wolf in joining the mission. When they reached

the valley, Enoch descended from the heavens in an imposing manner. Skittish wolves surrounded them.

“What are you doing here?” the ringleader asked. “We’re here to ask for help,” the princess answered.

“We’re not interested in helping anyone,” the wolf replied as it turned its back

“We need help to defeat Queen Anastasia.”

The wolf immediately looked back at the princess. “Tell me exactly what you’re planning.”

The princess explained everything to the wolf. For a moment, it stopped, thinking.

“I will help if you help us release the wolves they have captive.”

“Your price is accepted,” the princess replied.

It was almost dark so the group decided to rest before continuing their journey. Also, they needed to make a special kind of seat for the wolf so it could also travel with them on the dragon.

The head of the pack of wolves was called Nero. He’s very authoritative and ordered the knight and the princess to go to the woods to get leaves and twigs to make the seat for him.

“Princess, there’s something I want to tell you,” Edgar said when they reached

the area where they were to gather the needed materials.

“What is it?”

“I wonder if after the mission...”

Edgar was interrupted by a bunch of minotaurs approaching them. He was unarmed. Quickly, he picked up a stone and used it to attack but it was not enough. The gang managed to kidnap the Princess. Edgar had no choice but to return and tell the others what happened. The pack of wolves immediately ran into the forest. Enoch and Edgar followed.

A little bit later, they arrived near a cave. The wolves howled to call for Tauros, the leader of the minotaurs. As he

approached, Nero immediately attacked him by biting him in the neck. The minotaur simply threw Nero away but he got up again. The two looked at each other as they walked in a circle. Then, swiftly, Nero bit Tauros' snout. He groaned and fell on the ground bleeding.

“Never touch the princess! Are we clear?” Nero growled.

The minotaurs returned Princess Amelia and they all returned to the wolves' lair. They ate and took some rest. At dawn, they would travel south to convince the beautiful and superb mermaids for help. It was the hardest task they would have to do before going to the vampires' lair.

The group left early in the morning. Nero's excitement in being able to fly for the first time was visible. He

occasionally howled in delight. When they had arrived, Enoch flew over the beach and descended on the sand quietly. The sand was pure white and the water was clear and blue. Strong waves hit the shore and, on rocks near the beach, were mermaids. They were beautiful, sovereign, fearless, and did not care about the approaching princess and knight. They smiled when they saw the humans up close.

“What brings a beautiful young man here?” the most beautiful of them asked.

“We need the power of the Forbidden Jewel to win against Queen Anastasia,” Edgar answered, still feeling embarrassed.

“Well, well. You think it’s that easy? What will I gain in return?”

“Whatever you want to help us win.”

“Let’s see, what do I need? I already own beauty, wealth, power...” the mermaid paused as she gazed at Edgar. “I want you to become mine,” she said, pointing at him.

“But if you do that, you will take him to the depths of the ocean and he will die,” the princess argued.

“Exactly. That’s what I want. His life.”

“But that price is too high, we can’t give you that!”

“So the deal will be off.”

“Princess, I am willing to give my life so long as we destroy Queen Anastasia.”

With eyes still in tears, Princess Amelia hugged Edgar.

“Please, don’t do that. We’ll find another way.”

“Humans are so attached to feelings,” the mermaid said as she laughed.

At that moment, Princess Amelia had a brilliant idea. She remembered the stone jade Arak gave her. Immediately, she took it out of her pocket.

“Mermaid, you may have beautiful assets but I have the most beautiful jade stone which was guarded by goblins. Take the stone in exchange for the knight’s life.”

“Don’t call me a mermaid. My name is Alicia, the queen of mermaids,” Alicia demanded.

“This really is the most beautiful jade stone I’ve ever seen. With it, I will be the richest and the most beautiful queen. I accept the agreement. I will give you the Forbidden Jewel in exchange for the jade stone.”

With the deal done, Nero would be able to sneak in the vampires’ lair without succumbing to the forces of evil.

After lunch, the group immediately left towards the woods next to Queen Anastasia's castle. They would travel the remainder of the day and night. It would be more prudent to invade the castle while the sun is out.

"I can only get to this point. Hereafter, the vampires would be able to detect my presence," Enoch said when they reached the woods.

"This is a good site, I can open a gate for us to infiltrate the castle from here," the princess said.

"Before that the Princess has to use the Forbidden Jewel on me so I can sneak in and free the other wolves. They would be able to help us in our mission."

Father Emile seemed very nervous, unlike Edgar.

“Father, don’t worry. Our mission will go as planned.”

“God bless our mission, my son!”

When morning came, the group got ready. Princess Amelia first used the Forbidden Jewel on Nero. As she was doing so, a certain amount of blood began flowing from her nose. She tried to hide it but Nero was quick to notice.

“Princess, what is wrong?”

“Nero, please don’t tell anyone. This is a side effect from using the power I inherited from the fairies. My body is half human, so I can’t fully use my powers without getting any consequences.”

After that, the wolf was gone and had already probably infiltrated the castle. The princess was ready for the next step. She stood inside a circle on the ground with Father Emile and Edgar. With a hand signal, bright light enveloped them. Immediately, they were inside the castle.

The castle was quiet. The vampires should be resting in their coffins during the day. All they had to do was finding the Dragon Eye for Enoch and destroy Queen Anastasia. If she had transformed the prince into one of them, they would also have to break the curse. They assumed that her room would be in the highest tower of the castle so that’s

where they went. They ran through the huge halls of the palace, climbed the stairs, and tried their best not to make noise. Father Emile looked hopeless. Panic gripped him. As they turned into a hallway, they found the door that possibly led to Queen Anastasia. They opened the door and entered on tiptoe. Inside, they saw that the coffin was ajar on top of a table. Father Emile approached the coffin with a stake in his hand. Behind them, a voice suddenly emerged.

“You didn’t really think it would be that easy to destroy me, do you?” Queen Anastasia said as she roared in laughter.

As Edgar wielded his sword and prepared to attack, other vampires also appeared in the room. With an order from the Queen, the vampires attacked and apprehended the group.

“Go take the prince to show him his visitors.”

Moments later, Prince Michael entered the room. Princess Amelia’s eyes went bright. She was glad they had not turned him into a vampire.

“Michael!” cried the princess.

He ran to meet her and hugged her.

“I already know the whole truth, my princess.”

“What a beautiful family gathering! I was waiting, fairy princess. I will drink your blood and double my powers. I will be invincible, the greatest vampire of all. But just so we could have more fun, I will turn Michael into one of us.”

Anastasia finished her speech with laughter.

“I’ll never let you do that!” Edgar shouted at her.

“Well, well, if it’s not the noble knight. I have something special planned for you. The priest will have the same fate as the princess though.”

Then, the three prisoners and the prince were locked in a room. They were to stay

there until night time when a ritual was to be performed. The door was locked and all their hands were tied up.

“When the princess was born, there was a destabilization in the magical world. That’s why a curse fell upon the Kingdom of Algrave. It was also the reason why the vampires were able to enter the kingdom without being invited. If Queen Anastasia accomplishes her evil plan, she will be invincible. All realms will be in danger,” Prince Michael explained.

When he finished speaking, the door knob began to turn. Nero came through the door and everyone was extremely happy.

“It was difficult to steal the key and unlock it with my mouth,” Nero explained as he bit the rope that bounded the prisoners.

Once everyone was free, the princess spoke.

“It’s already dark, we are all weak and tired, we can’t let the vampires know we’re free. Nero, where’s the ritual going to be?”

“It will happen outside this tower. Up at the top.”

“Let’s split up. Emile and Nero will go after the Dragon’s Eye. Edgar and I will destroy the queen.”

“What about me?” Prince Michael asked.

“By midnight, if we don’t return, Enoch would come for us. If we meet the worst, go back to the kingdom, my prince.”

“I can’t just leave you here!”

“No one wants that to happen, but if necessary, flee.”

There was no time for conversation. Edgar and Princess Amelia went out the window to surprise the vampires from the roof. Meanwhile, Nero and Emilio went their own way to find the Dragon Eye.

At the roof, Edgar and Princess Amelia watched as the vampires laughed and

celebrated. They had a sword especially prepared for Princess Amelia's death. At the same time, Nero and the other wolves investigated where the Dragon Eye may be located. The other wolves told him that it was in the opposite tower, the room which was used to be Minerva's, Anastasia's dead sister. Nero and Father Emile hastily ran towards the said tower.

When the right time came, Edgar and Amelia jumped off the roof and surprised the vampires. They attacked them. The knight fought bravely, plunging his sword in the hearts every vampire who approached him. The princess, on the other hand, ran toward Queen Anastasia, ready to plunge a stake into her heart. Unknowingly, there was a vampire fast approaching her. He was about to kill the princess when Prince Michael protected her with a sword. The struggle continued. Princess Amelia killed some vampires with the stake she had while Edgar and Prince Michael fought side by side with their swords. Everything was going as

planned until Queen Anastasia caught Prince Michael by surprise. She held him by his throat.

“Be my prince or I’ll throw you down the castle.”

He was trapped and at the Queen’s mercy. Due to her supernatural strength, the Queen managed to get his sword, which she used against him. Prince Michael was cornered.

“I’d rather die than be part of darkness,” Prince Michael declared before willingly jumping from the tower.

“Michael!” Princess Amelia desperately cried.

Without hesitation, she jumped from the tower to save him.

Before touching the ground, the prince could not believe what had happened. The Princess grew wings from her back, tearing the back of her dress. She held him and took him to the top of the castle again. The legend became reality. At that moment, Princess Amelia's eyes were on fire. She took Edgar's sword and ran toward Queen Anastasia, who also wielded her weapon. The two dueled valiantly. The sound of their clashing swords left everyone on the tower in awe. Then, Queen Anastasia fell on the ground, got up, and grabbed the princess by the neck. At that moment, Amelia thrust her sword into the Queen's heart. The vampire turned to dust. All evil was over.

Just when they thought everything was over, they heard howling from the other side of the castle. From where they were, the three saw that the other side of the castle was in flames. They immediately ran towards the fire. As they approached, the more the fire blazed around them. Vampires were burning all around. When they reached the room at the top of the tower, they saw Father Emile lying on the floor. His leg was stuck under a log. Nero was also unable to move due to injuries he received from fighting the vampires. Edgar heroically faced the fire and rescued the priest. Prince Michael carried Nero out of the room too. The group fled immediately through the main entrance.

As they were leaving, a bunch of vampires tried to attack them. Enoch was already waiting for them nearby. With a single blow of the fire, he slew the remaining vampires. The princess, the knight, the prince, the priest, and the wolf fled, flying on the wings of the dragon.

When no longer at risk, they stopped to rest. Princess Amelia used her remaining energy to stop Father Emile from losing too much blood. He had unfortunately lost his leg during the fire. After that, the princess fainted.

The next day, Princess Amelia woke up to a clear day. The other members of the group were already eating fresh fruits picked from trees nearby. Father Emile handed Enoch the Dragon Eye. Through it, the vampires were able to see beyond the castle walls. As they were leaving the castle, Nero used what's left of his energy to signal the other wolves to flee. The pack, which was dominated by the vampires, were now free. Everyone was excited and happy. Finally, it was over. They knew that some vampires could have escaped but at least there was no threat to the other kingdoms.

When the time came, the group parted with Nero, then Enoch. Using the horses

the left with the dragons, the remaining group travelled to Alcoutim. There, they were received with joy. Monoceros, Aljezur, Arak, and King Louis celebrated their arrival.

“My Princess, reign with me in Algarve. Marry me,” Prince Michael proposed.

“I’m sorry, my Prince, I can’t govern a kingdom of humans, now that I have these huge wings. I must stay with my people. The magical beings need me.”

“That will not matter, everyone will understand.”

“I’d rather reign here, and, if Edgar accepts, I want him to be the reigning prince of Alcoutim.”

In saying this, the knight embraced the princess and accepted her request. Prince Michael did not feel upset over Princess Amelia's decision. After a while, he found a beautiful and generous princess for Algarve. For many years to come, the kingdoms lived in peace and joy.

The Pirates of Vila Velha

Vila Velha is a coastal town which belongs to the state of Espírito Santo. In 1780, several farmers dominated the region. They produced many kinds of food but the most common one was cane sugar. Most of the plantations were driven by slave labor.

On the beach of Costa, near the Stone Mermaid, there was a lighthouse. It was taken care of by the Alves family for generations. From father to son, the teachings on how to signal correctly were transferred.

Faust was the patriarch of the Alves generation then. He had three children: Patrick, Veronica, and Albertina. He was married to Ivete, who was very ill and bedridden. The family lived in the lighthouse. The huge building had rooms,

halls, and a kitchen. At the top, a huge mirror was illuminated with candles, the light of which indicates the correct path for those sailing.

Ancient history, however, surrounded the place. They said that there was a secret map hidden in the lighthouse. Who ever finds it would have access to the greatest treasure in Brazil. Some people said that the map leads to the location of the Convent of Penha fortune. However, nobody really knew if the map and the treasure were real. For this reason, Veronica, Albertina, and Patrick were trained on how to use the sword. This way, they would be able to protect their home if people interested in finding the treasure map break into the lighthouse.

The eldest daughter, Veronica, had dark skin. She had long curly black hair. Albertina was two years younger than her. The two girls were very similar in physical attributes. Patrick, on the other hand, had very pale skin and straight black hair. He was also too tall for his age. The girls

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looked more like their mother and the boy
took after their father.

One rainy autumn afternoon, Veronica
and Albertina were up in the lighthouse,
signaling any lost mariner with candles.
The sky was purple and it rained non-
stop. When Albertina looked through the
telescope, she saw a huge ship
approaching the port. Looking more
intently, she saw another two other ships
following the first. Could they be lost? The
girl had doubts. She began to think
something was wrong. Those ships didn't
seem lost at all.

“Veronica, strange ships are approaching
the harbor!”

“Let me see!”

After looking through the telescop,
Veronica shared her sister's opinion.

“Albertina, we must tell Patrick and our parents. We also have to take our swords.”

“So, you really think we may be attacked?”

“It seems so!”

The two ran down the stairs. They knocked on Patrick’s room but no one answered. When they opened it, their brother was not there. Immediately, they went to their father’s room. Their bedridden mother slept soundly through the storm. Hastily, they took their swords and left the room.

“Ring the bell so that the villagers will know that danger is approaching,” Veronica said.

“And where are you going?”

“Someone needs to watch the lighthouse. If this place is dominated, the village is next.”

Albertina donned a cloak, drew her sword, and went out through the rain towards the village. She needed to ring the bell to warn the people of the possible danger. Veronica, meanwhile, stood next to the door that led to the entrance of the lighthouse. She was ready to stop anyone who tried to storm the place.

Albertina ran through the heavy rain. Finally, she reached the entrance to the village. Immediately, she ran to the bell

and rang it. Prying eyes appeared at the windows of the nearby houses.

“Prepare for possible enemy attack!”

She then disappeared in the rain and ran back to the lighthouse. She ran as fast as she could. Albertina could not leave her sister alone to face the enemy.

Upon reaching the lighthouse, Veronica was no longer at the door. What had happened to her sister? Albertina did not hesitate to enter the building. Inside, she heard some noise coming from the basement. She hurried down the stairs. Once there, she could not believe her eyes. Veronica was fighting against Patrick and Faust.

“Stop it! Why are you fighting?”

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“Our father and our brother are leaders of the enemy ships!”

Albertina immediately drew her sword and attacked her brother. Now the battle was balanced. The clash of swords echoed throughout the basement.

“They want the treasure map!” Veronica said.

“But we’ve destroyed it ourselves!” Albertina replied. At this time, the two men stopped fighting.

“So all this time you knew where the treasure is!” Faust shouted at them.

“We burned it without knowing the treasure’s location.” Albertina said.

“How did you know it was the treasure map?” Patrick asked.

“It was written on the envelope,” Veronica answered immediately.

“We must take them to jail, Veronica.”

“That is the right thing to do.”

“You can’t do that. Our men should have already invaded the village!” Faust said cheerfully.

Enraged, Albertina attacked her father. Veronica did the same with Patrick. The fight continued and seemed as if it would never end. The four of them had the same level of strength and skill. In their minds,

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the sisters worried about the villagers. What would happen to the people who lived there?

Then, Patrick was disarmed by Albertina. She gathered all the strength she possessed to apprehend her brother. Unfortunately, Faust was also able to disarm Veronica.

“Let go of him and I’ll let Veronica go!”

“She’s your daughter, I can’t believe you’re actually capable of hurting her!”

Sobbing, Albertina freed her brother and both men fled into the darkness. The sisters ran after them but they lost sight of the two. Now, the only thing left was to help the local villagers. The two girls immediately ran towards the village.

When they arrived, the situation was chaotic. Women and children were running to escape while the men fought. The sisters hurriedly joined in the fight and fought bravely. They were able to defeat about thirty men. Then, from the top of the mountain, they could hear a bell ringing. The enemies had invaded the Convent of Penha. At that moment, the invaders began to withdraw from the village. They've executed their plan and discovered that the treasure in the convent was false.

Veronica and Albertina mounted a horse from the villagers. They needed to find out what had happened in the convent. They rode as fast as the lightning falling from heaven. The convent was difficult to access because it was located on a high hill, in the midst of a thick rainforest. When they arrived, they saw that the entrance of the convent was on fire. The nuns were throwing buckets of water to kill the fire. Some of them were wounded and most were tired. Mother Matilde received Albertina and Veronica.

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“It’s terrible! Two armed men entered the Convent and was looking for treasure!

“Faust and Patrick,” Veronica muttered.

“Did they take something?” Albertina asked.

“Obviously not. There’s no worldly treasure in God’s house.”

Another nun joined them.

“They said they will return in five years and, next time, they’ll find the treasure.”

Veronica and Albertina spent the rest of the night helping the nuns and the villagers. They should rebuild what was lost. They knew now that their father and brother were pirates and only the two of

them could stop them. The next five years, they have to be stronger than them.

It was almost dawn when the sisters were finally able to return to the lighthouse. Though they've helped the nuns and the villagers, the bad news hadn't ended just yet. When Veronica entered their mother's room, she found her pale, cold, and motionless. While fighting the enemies, their mother died. Albertina fell to the ground with trembling hands and eyes full of tears. Veronica knelt and hugged her sister. They both only had each other left.

The next time they meet the pirates, they have to make sure they're prepared. They would be able to succeed because even in the darkness, the sisters could still see light. One sister is the hope of another.

One day, Albertina went to the village jail. She wanted to investigate some of the pirates who were arrested.

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“How are you, Albertina?” asked the jail guard, Muller.

He was short, fat, bald, and had a huge red mustache.

“Take me to the captured pirates.”

The jail guard guided Albertina through a dark corridor with several cells. One couldn't clearly see what's inside because the place was dimly lit. After walking a bit, they stopped in front of the final cell at the end of the corridor. Approaching closer, she could see a bunch of men. They were dressed in eccentric outfits with pompous shirts and hats. Most of them also had long hair. One of them, who had quite a gallant air about him and a beautiful face, approached the railing.

“Has my fiancé come to visit me?” he told Albertina.

“I want to know how long you’ve worked for Faust?” Albertina asked.

“What’s in it for me?”

Albertina showed him several gold coins. At the sight of the coins, the other prisoners also approached the bars.

“So, tell me how long you’ve worked for Faust.”

“Ten years,” replied the pirate.

“What’s he planning?”

“To answer that, I’ll need a few more things...”

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“How much gold do you want?”

“It’s not a matter of gold, I want my
freedom.”

“Tell me what you know and you’ll be
free,” Albertina spoke. “I don’t trust you.”

“And I also have no confidence in you.”
“Then we can’t negotiate, can we?”

Albertina threw him the gold coins. His
eyes flashed. “I’ll be back in a few days,”
she said before leaving. “Don’t resist my
charm.”

“Shut up, Diogo!” the jail guard shouted at
the pirate.

After leaving the jail, Albertina returned to the lighthouse and told Veronica what happened.

“Is he telling the truth?” Veronica asked.

“I do not know, but the structure of the ship, I think it’s just not probable.”

“I had also thought of that.”

“The most important thing is that they failed to find the treasure,” Albertina said.

“It was good that we read the map before burning it,” Veronica said.

“I remember it like it was yesterday, the day we found that treasure map as children.”

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When the two sisters were still young, they played throughout the lighthouse. One day, they found the map hidden in the basement. By accident, Veronica dropped a huge painting as they were playing. It was a woman's portrait. She had extremely pale skin and long, curly, brown hair. Albertina helped her sister put the painting back on the wall. However, she noticed a piece of paper behind the picture. With difficulty, the sisters managed to remove the piece of paper. It was very old and discolored. It was an envelope sealed with a red stamp that looked like that of royal families. Veronica opened it and both of them read what was written.

“By the time you're reading this, I'm certainly dead. If you have found this letter, you are certainly worthy to take care of the treasure I am to disclose in this letter.

My name is Maria Constantina Alvarenga Borba Magalhaes Alves de Bourbon. I am the heir of the Duke of Vila Velha. For

generations, we have kept the greatest treasure that could be found in this land. It's not only full of gold but also of magical objects – an all-seeing telescope, a heart compass, and the mirror of truth, among many others. However, they should be used sparingly. A huge curse will come up on those who use them for their own selfish desires.

I myself am a victim of this curse. I was, I mean, I'm still in love with Louis Bourbon, my distant cousin. I used the all-seeing telescope to observe him from far away. Until one day, I discovered that Louis was in love with another woman. I then decided not to marry and spend my life making sure that the treasure does not fall into the wrong hands.

My family owned the Lighthouse at the beach so I moved here. I left our mansion to be taken care of by my cousins on my mother's side. Louis is a cousin on my father's side. Obviously, if you live in the Lighthouse, we are related by blood.

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I'm too old now. Louis now lives in London with his wife and children. I leave you, my reader, lamentations and the responsibility of taking care of the treasure. The second piece of paper in this envelope is a treasure map. I spread the rumor that the treasure is in the Penha Convent so I also ask you to take care of the nuns. They are not to blame for my little lie.

With affection, I say farewell and I ask that you take on this burden.

I wish a lot of light in your life,

Maria Constantina Alvarenga Borba
Magalhaes Alves de Bourbon”

The letter seemed to be stained with tears but, though very old, the paper still survived to wait for those who are worthy

to protect the treasure. Veronica and Albertina looked closely at the treasure map. They knew the place where the treasure was but were unable to go there because they were still young and didn't know how to sail. After reading the map, they burned it with the letter. They felt it was their responsibility to continue what Mary Constantine had begun. When they asked their father about her, he said she was a distant relative. Now the sisters had five years to prepare against their father and brother. They had probably realized that the girls knew the treasure's location. They knew it was not the Convent so next time they come, they would come after them. They needed to be ready.

The next morning, the two visited some farms and bought some slaves. They chose the strongest and bravest among them and brought them to the lighthouse.

“From now on, you are all free!” Albertina shouted.

The men's eyes widened.

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“You’re letting us go just like that?”

“Yes, you are free and you may leave if you want to but before you do, we have a proposal,” Veronica said.

“What is the proposal?”

“We will give you salary if you work for us and we will also give you money so you can buy the freedom of your loved ones,” Albertina said.

“We can’t understand, what do you want us to do?” asked another man.

“We will pay you to work as our sailors and protect the Penha Convent and the village,” Albertina explained.

Many of the men knelt to the ground in tears with their hands raised to the heavens. Are they really going to be free?

“They will have hours of work and days of rest. Don’t call us Masters. Call us Captains instead. We will be the captains of three ships,” Veronica added.

“You are very good to us. We will always be loyal to you.”

“Your loyalty is the best thing could have right now,” Albertina answered.

“Today, we will redeem your families,” Veronica said, ending their announcement.

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After that, they used money from the treasure to pay for the freedom of the slaves' families. Some chose to go and the sisters did not stop them. Those who remained, received what was promised. The sisters paid the farmers so generously that they couldn't refuse.

The ex-slaves created three ships named Ruby West, Lotus Flower, and Maria Constantina. The first was red, but dark. The second was a little pink, lighter than Ruby West. The latter was done with white mahogany wood.

Armando was the wisest among all the ex-slaves. Albertina soon realized that he is an insightful man. The strongest, on the other hand, was Francisco. Also, the most loyal. Veronica commanded Ruby West, Albertina commanded Maria Constantina, while Armando commanded the Lotus Flower. The nuns in the Penha Convent were trained by the ex-slaves to fight using swords and firearms. As for sailing, the sisters taught the men the knowledge

that has been passed to them for generations. During training, the freed men also built little houses for their families.

Veronica and Albertina believed they could change history even though they were women with dark skin and no husband. They were revolutionary. No one went against them. Everyone knew how strong and powerful they were. Maria Constantina's blood ran through the veins of the Alves sisters.

One day, Muller went to the lighthouse to talk to Albertina.

“Good day, Albertina!”

“Good morning, Muller. What are you doing here so early?”

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“I bring you a message. Diogo wants to see you.” The Albertina’s heart tightened.

“What does he want?”

“He says he has something important to tell you.”

“I’ll go see him another time.”

When Muller left, Albertina discussed the matter with her sister.

“What will he tell you?”

“Not sure, Veronica. But, I think he will sell us more information about Patrick and our father.”

“We’ll need more money to pay for information. We should go now, while most people are still sleeping.”

“Yes, the location is a bit far off too.”

The sisters decided to go the treasure’s location. The treasure was so great that they could squander it for a thousand years. Silently, the sisters walked towards the beach. They went to an area where the sand was very white surrounded by palm trees and tall grass. A small boat was tied to one of the trees. Veronica untied it then the two pushed the boat into the water. They rode it and began to row. The water was crystal clear. As they sailed, shadows could be seen passing behind the small boat.

“Remember the first time we went to the treasure, Albertina? We were afraid of these shadows.”

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“I remember, Veronica. I held you tightly when I saw them.”

They both laughed and continued to navigate the empty blue of the sea which would later become the beautiful song “Empty Blue Sea.” They rowed until they reached the stone mermaid. There, they went ashore.

The area was rocky. It was a mountain of rocks equivalent to a ten-storey building in height. They walked a bit to the right then they started climbing. A few meters up, Veronica examined the boulders. After a few moments, she pushed one of them. It was a camouflaged entrance. Finally, they’ve reached the treasure.

Inside, it was very dark but it was huge and there was gold everywhere. Among the gold were several objects. There was a gold bezel and the all-seeing telescope from the letter. The mirror of truth was also there, covered by a burgundy cloth.

The compass of the heart was on top of a small table. This, Albertina took. The arrow pointed to the opposite side of where she was. More precisely, to the village. Quickly, she put it back. Veronica then approached her, holding a flute.

“We need this flute, when the day of the battle comes,” Veronica said.

“Certainly,” Albertina agreed.

They took the amount of gold they needed and returned to the boat.

After lunch, Albertina was at the village to visit in jail. Muller greeted her and guided her to the same path long ago. The pirate approached the railing, feeling excited when he saw Albertina.

“My fiancée finally decides to visit me!”

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“Don’t be sarcastic! What do you want?”

“Pay my bail, in exchange, I will tell you all
about Faust’s plans.”

“How can I trust you?”

“My loyalty remains to whoever has the
gold.”

The man with long black hair, very pale
skin, and beautiful brown eyes beckoned
her to approach him. When she was near,
he spoke.

“In a few days, I have to be out of here.
The Portuguese Crown is unforgiving for

pirates. Only if you buy my freedom can I stay alive.”

“I don’t trust you but I’ll buy your freedom.”

His face went bright.

“You shall be my prisoner,” Albertina told him.

“It’ll be an honor, mademoiselle!”

Albertina spoke to the Muller and paid him for Diogo’s freedom. He was then taken to the lighthouse in handcuffs. All the while, Albertina pointed a gun at him.

“Take a shower, change your clothes, and eat. You will stay in one of the rooms.”

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“You have a noble heart, just like your father, Faust.”

“How do you know that?”

“I will fulfill my promise and tell you everything I know, Ma’am.”

Indeed, the pirate fulfilled his promise but Veronica doubted whether what he said was actually true. Still, he remained as their prisoner.

On the following days, the former slaves continued their training with the sisters and as time passed, the big day had finally arrived. They would again meet Patrick and Faust in their final battle.

As it was, five years ago, the sky was purple and the rain fell. Thunder growled across the heavens. Ruby West, Lotus

Flower, and Maria Constantina were ready on their stations on the turbulent sea. Diogo was aboard the Maria Constantina with Albertina. From afar, they saw the enemy vessels approaching. When they've reached the right range, they fired cannons. The enemies did the same.

“Do not let them pass by us!” Veronica ordered.

“Attack the enemy!” Armando yelled.

“Attack at my command!” Albertina shouted.

The exchange of shots was intense. The vessels on both sides rattled heavily. Eventually, the ships were able to approach Ruby West and Maria Constantina. The fight was now on board the ships. Only Lotus Flower continued attacking from a distance.

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“Before I die, I need to do this!” Diogo said before kissing Albertina and fighting bravely against his former comrades.

Veronica fought Patrick. Albertina, on another ship, faced her father. The sound of the clashing swords was fierce. Francis was able to overthrow five pirates alone. He was, indeed, the strongest and the most noble of the sailors. Meanwhile, Albertina was able to disarm her father. Across the ship, Diogo was also able to disarm a pirate but another one shot him in the back. Albertina cried his name as he fell. Using the distraction, Faust armed himself again and attacked her.

In the other ship, Veronica had her brother cornered. His skills did not improve at all in the last five years, while Veronica trained hard to become stronger. Then, she withdrew the flute from her pocket and started playing it. A giant squid suddenly emerged from the ocean and attacked one of the enemy ships. Veronica then continued the assault on her brother. Unarmed, he surrendered.

“Stop the Battle!” Patrick commanded his men.

The pirates who were in Ruby West surrendered but aboard Maria Constantina, the fight continued.

“Why are you so greedy? Why this war?” Albertina asked her father as they fought.

“For the gold of course,” Faust replied.

Faust attacked his daughter relentlessly. She blocked each of his attacks. Again, they were at par. With a quick move, Faust drew his firearm and pointed it towards his daughter. However, he was hit in the head from behind by one of the sailors.

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“We have your leader, surrender!” the former slave shouted.

The pirates didn’t have a choice but to surrender. Albertina immediately ran to where Diogo was. He was bleeding profusely.

“Diogo...” Albertina said in tears.

“Albertina, I love you.”

“Stay still, save your energy...”

“It’s my time to leave. Promise me that you will be happy.”

“I’ll wait for you until we find each other again beyond this life.”

“Hold me.”

Albertina hugged Diogo as his eyes closed. They never opened again.

The village now held more prisoners, including Patrick and Faust. All seemed well, but the sisters had more to do. They sailed Maria Constantina sailed to the Stone Mermaid. There, they took all the gold and divided it among the former slaves. They hid the magical artifacts. When it was empty, they set fire to the place.

“Only thus can we break the curse,” Albertina said.

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“I support your decision. We will be together until the end,” Veronica replied while holding her sister’s hand.

The Rescue of Frederico Carneiro de Campos

It was the year 1867. The then governor of the province of Mato Grosso, Frederico Carneiro de Campos, was a prisoner of Solano López, who was then leading Paraguay. Frederico was already a prisoner even before Paraguay started invading Brazilian lands.

One day, during the war, Magdalene was gathering medicinal herbs next to the swamp. She was very careful since she lived in the region where the conflict between the warring nations had begun. Magdalene had white skin and long brown hair. When she heard a loud bang from where she was, she immediately took her basket of herbs and ran home.

As she was running, Magdalene saw a man lying near a tree. She stopped and walked towards him. The man was tall, thin, and was wearing a military uniform which had the symbol of the Paraguayan government. He had beautiful green eyes which seduced Magdalene. She noticed that he's wounded near his belly. Soon, the man was unconscious. Magdalene immediately rummaged in her basket. Having selected the right herbs, she used them on the man's wound and hoped for his condition to improve. After that, she tried her best to carry him to her house. He was heavier than he appeared to be.

After having difficulty carrying the man to safety, Magdalene immediately prepared more herbs to help him. Magdalene's house was very modest. The walls were red and made of bricks. The roof was built with mud and straw. Magdalene's older sister was also living there. Incidentally, they were the only ones living in the area. Aurora was her

sister's name. She disapproved greatly when Magdalene brought the man home.

“Magdalene, have you completely gone mad? You just brought an enemy to our house!”

“Now, Aurora! He's hurt! What can he do to us?”

“What if he discovers your secret?”

“I know he is not a person with an evil heart!”

“Your habit of judging people's hearts without even knowing them annoys me too!”

Suddenly, their discussion was interrupted by a knock on the door. Magdalene looked through the keyhole and recognized who the garments belonged to. It was Octavius, the closest neighbor and friend of the girls. She opened the door and he entered the room.

“How are you, girls? Should I also say, boy?”

Octavius looked at the red-haired boy.

“Hello, Octavius! I was telling this dunderhead we should not protect the enemy.”

“Octavius, please tell her that you feel this man’s heart is good!”

Octavius had blonde hair, beautiful blue eyes, and a very angelic face. His garments were not like the other boys in the area. He wore something that looked like a tunic. It was long and light blue in color. In his right hand, he held a staff almost as tall as him. It was golden and looked like pure gold.

“I can’t tell his intentions at this time. Still, you should be careful with anyone you don’t know. You know you have to protect your secret.”

“Exactly, that’s what I told her!”

“I will follow whatever your advice is, Octavius!” Magdalene replied, still disagreeing with her sister.

Octavius was not like other people. He had powers to heal others, emanate various types of energy, and feel the yearnings of the soul. The three of them assumes that they’re the only ones who knew Magdalene’s secret. Right now though, there’s also the war going on.

Suddenly, the red-haired man spoke with a Spanish accent.

“I need to find that thing that is capable of producing...” he said but he didn’t have enough strength to finish talking.

The man was merely mumbling in his sleep but what he said made Aurora and

Magdalene's eyes go wide. Octavius remained motionless. The redhead had knowledge about the legend.

“I told you, he was not trustworthy!” exclaimed Aurora.

Magdalene was not able to answer her sister.

“Aurora, watch him closely. Magdalene and I need to check if the key remains where we hid it,” Octavius said.

The two rushed inside the girls' room and dragged one of the beds away from its spot. On the floor was a hidden door made of clay. Magdalene pulled it open. Inside, there was a ladder. They went

through the hole and went down the ladder.

Below the hut was a room with grey walls. There were shelves of book lining the walls. It was dimly lit but the modern machinery kept there was impressive.

The legend talked about a certain skilled man who lived at a nearby marsh. He created important and useful machines which were powered by steam. He created machines for cutting vegetation or planting new plants. He could create anything possible. However, such potential could also be exploited by war. Modern weapons, like the tanks and many other weapons, serve to destroy a nation by another. People who had the same ability as this man were called builders. However, the man in the legend died and, in his family, only one person had the same gift. It was Magdalene.

This story was only a legend and, thus, unconfirmed but countries involved in war sought this potential power source. For this reason, when the father of the girls died, they moved out of the region in which they used to live. They travelled to the province of Mato Grosso and set up a home in a marshland where no other houses were around. They did not talk to other people and kept a low profile. They absolutely could not let anyone know about their secret. The only exception was Octavius. He's been a friend of the family for a long time. He didn't age as fast as humans and he possessed a very mature mind. When their father died, he took the responsibility of ensuring the girls' safety.

In the underground room, Octavius and Madelene saw that her secret was still safe. Among all the machines, one stood out. It was some kind of ship made of wood and metal. It also had two huge

dragonfly wings. Then, light started blinking from a wooden box on a nearby table. Magdalene approached it. It was metallic and she had to open it by rotating a large gear that moved lower and lower. After a few rounds, a hologram came from the box. It was a woman looking rather uncomfortable.

“Hello, Magdalene!”

“Hello, Miss Augusta. How are you?”

“Not very well. I contacted you to say that you need to come here.”

“What happened?”

“Solano López is about to find it!”

Magdalene was shocked by the news. She wondered if the young red-haired man was under the orders of the Paraguayan dictator.

“I found a wounded Paraguayan soldier and brought him here. Was he a spy for Solano López?”

“Keep him as a prisoner and come here as soon as possible.”

“I will.”

“Once you arrive here, I will give you instructions on what we’re planning.”

“What’s the plan for?”

“To save the governor of Mato Grosso. I have to go now, see you soon.”

“Understood.”

Octavius paid much attention to what the two women talked about. He knew he needed to help the sisters who were about to start in a journey.

“Magdalene, we need to leave soon then?”

“Yes, the Valley of Builders needs my help.”

The Valley of the Builders was a secret location in Pantanal, Mato Grosso. Many builders lived there. Ezekiel, the sisters’ father, came from this place. In a city outside the valley, he met Olivia, their

mother. She's a humble woman of Brazilian Indian descent. She was the only one, not from the Valley of Builders, who knew about her husband's gift.

In the place where they lived, Ezekiel built many useful machines for their fellow villagers but no one knew it was a special kind of ability until Colonel Gaston, from the military forces of Brazil, went travelling to confirm the rumors of someone with such an ability. The rumors were never confirmed but Ezekiel feared that after his death, someone might harm his daughters, especially Magdalene, who inherited his abilities. Therefore, Ezekiel collected all the machines he had made for the people of the village. On his death, the girls were hidden and protected by Octavius. Unfortunately, their mother had also died.

Octavius and the sisters started getting ready for their journey. Unexpectedly, while they were preparing, the red-haired man held Aurora and pointed a knife to her throat. Aurora, who had dark skin as her mother, went pale.

“Corpus-Lapis!” Octavius shouted at that moment, pointing his staff towards the man.

He stood in place, petrified. He could only move his mouth and eyes. Octavius’ powers were formidable. He practiced spells written in Latin.

“Oh, my God!” Magdalene exclaimed.

“So, the builders are actually protected by a magician!” the man exclaimed.

“I knew it was a bad idea to bring him home, Magdalene!” Aurora shouted at her sister.

“Excuse me, Aurora, but we don’t have much time for an argument.

We must go to the Valley of the Builders.”

“And what do we do with this unfortunate man?”

“I am not unfortunate! My name is Xavier!” “Whatever. It means little to us now.”

“Augusta told us to take him as our prisoner,” Octavius said. “They’re really crazy! How can we take this man to the valley!” “It was the order given to us,” replied Magdalene.

“I will transport the books and machines myself. When we reach the valley, I’ll give them to you.”

Octavius could cross dimensions too but he could not have more than two people with him to another world. He could, however, do this with large amounts of objects.

Aurora, Magdalene, and Octavius went to the room under the bed. Their prisoner floated around the room, still petrified. They would travel on the metal ship with dragonfly wings to the Valley of the Builders. That certain region, of the

province of Mato Grosso, was full of swamps. It was mostly flooded which made it a suitable site for the builders because no one but them had enough knowledge and technology on how to get to the heart of the wetlands. Octavius camouflaged the vessel with magic so that other people would not see them.

In the room where the machines were, there was a large iron door. Obviously, they were below ground but the iron door led to a cliff where they could easily achieve flight. The extension of the underground secret room went beyond the hut. It was very vast and was under a desolate area. The outside of the huge gate was camouflaged with local plants.

Octavius used his staff to transport the books and the machines. The other three who were already aboard the dragonfly ship waited for him.

After a few moments, the wizard joined them. Magdalene placed herself behind the wheel. To start, she triggered a switch on a panel next to the wheel. The gears around the ship began to spin and smoke came out of a huge tube in the bottom left corner of the vessel. They were ready.

The spacious ship was soon in the air, rocketing into the clouds. When they reached a stable altitude, Xavier smiled closely at the sight of the cotton-like clouds. Magdalene then asked Octavius to take over for her for a moment. She wanted to talk to the petrified prisoner alone.

“Hello, Xavier,” Magdalene greeted him.

“Why are you smiling at me, enemy?” he replied, rejecting her friendly gesture.

“I’m not your enemy. I just want to know why you attacked my sister.”

“We are enemies.”

Magdalene moved closer towards him. She touched his cheeks with her right hand. At that moment, Xavier was able to feel her kind intentions. His beautiful green eyes, bathed in light radiated by the sun, met Magdalene’s brown ones. Xavier did not understand how someone with such skills as her could feel compassion for the enemy. He also did not know the reason for the joy in her smile. At that moment, Octavius’ spell started wearing off. Xavier was able to

move a bit. With difficulty, he grabbed Magdalene's hand. His face flushed.

"This is not our war. So, I you're not my enemy," she said.

"Thank you for taking care of me," he replied.

The tender moment was short lived. Octavius lost control of the vessel and it seemed like they were falling. With one hand, Xavier held on to the mast. He held on to Magdalene's hand firmly as she also clung firmly on the ship. Aurora did the same. Octavius immediately tried to reverse the situation but to no avail. Xavier broke away from the mast and slid across the floor to help Octavius. They tried their best to gain stability again, but the ship was old and did not work as well as it did. Near them,

Magdalene saw a swamp. There, they forced the ship. With a loud thud, it collided heavily against water.

“Is everyone okay?” Magdalene asked.

Octavius, Aurora, and Xavier answered yes. From there, they would have to sail to the edge of the swamp and continue their journey by foot. The Valley of the Builders was a difficult site to access because of the swamps but they had no choice. It was almost lunchtime so they would probably reach the valley at night. The magic Octavius used to conceal the ship was still working so it remained hidden. Aurora, then, brought out some food she brought from home. They had some bread, crackers, and grape juice for lunch and everyone felt satisfied, including Xavier. Magdalene also asked Octavius if it was okay to leave Xavier free to move around. Octavius granted

her request but did not take his eyes off the man.

After some time, they finally came ashore. The place was gorgeous. There were tropical pink flamingos all around plus a few trees. Magdalene fell in love with the birds as she gazed at the sight before her. Meanwhile, Aurora went to pick some fruits off the few trees that stood where they were. When she was done, they started walking.

Though the land is not enclosed by a forest, there were leopards and other wild animals around so not a lot of people ventured there. For the same reason, Octavius had to guide the group carefully. Xavier obliged to walk close behind Octavius to make sure he wouldn't escape. Magdalene accompanied him closely. As the sun was setting, Aurora and Octavius felt a

presence in their midst. They looked at each other.

“Octavius, do you feel that? We are not alone.”

“I do!”

Aurora always sensed when people with magic and supernatural abilities approached. It was how they found Octavius. He came from a dimension called Azura. A prophecy states that a boy, born on the last day of the fourth stellar war, would meet a formidable creator of machines in another realm. Thus, Octavius fate was intertwined with Magdalene’s.

Darkness arose quickly. By then, Octavius could tell what approached them. He held his staff firmly. Then,

about ten vampires appeared before them. One of them immediately grabbed Magdalene.

“What a beautiful maid! You would make a nice gift for our master!” the vampire said as it roared with laughter.

Octavius launched an attack against the one holding Magdalene. Immediately, he turned to dust. The vampires turned to Octavius, admiring his skills. Then, he held Aurora’s and Magdalene’s arms. He would have to use dimensional transport to get them out of there but he won’t be able to take all of them. As the vampires attacked, he had no choice but to leave Magdalene and Xavier behind.

With an evil smile, one of the vampires who had blonde hair said, “What a

gorgeous red-haired boy! He can be our little pet!”

“How about the builder?” asked another vampire with black hair.

“Take her to the master.”

The blonde vampire grabbed both of Xavier’s hands. The black-haired one did the same with Magdalene. They were both transported into a castle. Upon arrival, the vampire pushed the prisoners to walk through the gates. Inside, they entered a huge hall. On its ceiling was a painting of a beautiful but gloomy looking man. His hair was brown and his eyes were red. When they reached an intersection, the blonde vampire pulled Xavier’s arm and walked to the left. The other vampire pulled Magdalene to the

opposite side. The two were imprisoned in different rooms.

Meanwhile, Octavius and Aurora were in Azura. It was a very cold place. Snow dropped incessantly throughout the realm. Octavius had his hands on his face as tears ran down his cheeks. His ability to cross dimensions was limited. He can only use it again after a few hours.

“Aurora, what will happen to Magdalene?” he asked crying.

“All we could do is pray,” she answered, shivering due to the cold.

In the castle, Xavier was taken to the fourth room in the last floor. He was chained and locked up by the blonde

vampire. Inside the room was a window. When he looked out, he saw that behind the castle walls is a passing river. At that moment, the young man had a brilliant idea.

Meanwhile, Magdalene was taken to a room on the other side of the castle. The place was only lit by a torch and there were no windows anywhere. The black-haired vampire locked her up and left. Soon after, he returned with a beautiful dress in hand.

“Wear this. The master will transform you into one of us at midnight,” he ordered as he unchained her.

Magdalene’s heart froze. Her end was approaching. At midnight, the young builder was taken to the castle’s main hall. She wore a black fitted dress. Her hair was tied up and she had red lipstick on her lips. Xavier was also there, still held by the blonde-haired vampire. Even in his current situation of distress, he

marveled at Magdalene's beauty. She looked even more beautiful in that dress.

The vampires gradually gathered in the hall. They talked a lot but everyone went silent when their master entered. His image was indeed faithful to the painting on the ceiling.

“Come to me, Magdalene!” he ordered with laughter. “You're so beautiful, my queen!”

Magdalene uneasily walked up towards the man. He held her by the waist as he brought his face near her neck. As his lips approached, one could see his fangs grow. With some difficulty because of his chains, Xavier pulled out his hidden firearm and shot the vampire. The being of darkness turned towards him.

“You actually believe you can kill me with just that?”

Suddenly, he fell on the ground and writhed in pain before turning into dust. Magdalene had put a stake through his back and went through his heart. Xavier reached for Magdalene as she ran towards him. They climbed the stairs as fast as they could with the vampires following behind them. When they reached the room where Xavier had been held, he started climbing out the window. Magdalene followed his lead.

“Let’s jump into the river!”

“Are you crazy?”

“Vampires can’t cross running water!”

“We don’t have a choice do we.”

Xavier stared at Magdalene. The moonlight illuminated her beautiful chocolate brown eyes. Her beautiful red lips were highlighted by the dark night. Without warning, Xavier kissed her. After that, hand in hand, they jumped into the stream as the sound of the approaching vampires came closer.

Having jumped from a high place, both hit the water hard. Xavier had difficulty in the water as the current went against him. Magdalene swam back and put an arm around his neck. However, they weren’t far from danger just yet. Near them, an alligator approached. Xavier tried to shoot the animal. It wasn’t

injured but, luckily, it left. With difficulty, they reached the riverbank.

“That whole time, you had a gun?”

“Yup.”

“Why didn’t you just use it run away?”

“I don’t want to be separated from you,” he said, his face flushing.

Magdalene also went red.

“How did you get that stake?”

“I built it! That’s what I do! The place where they held me was lit by a torch, I

used my knife to turn the wood into a stake.”

“You had a knife?”

“Obviously! A builder has to always have a tool to assist them in their work.”

They both smiled. From there, they would have to walk to the Valley of Builders. They had already lost a lot of time but they're both tired so they decided to sleep then continue travelling the next day. Still chained, Xavier rested opposite where Magdalene slept.

As daybreak came, Magdalene was awakened by Octavius and Augusta.

“Augusta! How did you find us?”

“Magdalene! It took us longer than expected but we saw Octavius and Aurora. They told us what happened.”

“I thought I’ll never see you again!”
Octavius exclaimed as he embraced her.

“Thanks to Xavier, I’m saved!”

Aurora looked at the man with disapproval.

“Come we have to go. We need to start moving. The life of Frederico Carneiro de Campos depends on us!” Augusta said

before Magdalene could say anything more.

Just ahead, a huge vehicle, in the form of an animal, was parked. They climbed a ladder and stepped into the door on its ceiling like a tank. After some time, they reached the Valley of the Builders. The place had many huge buildings. Smoke from steam engines came from every corner. There were different flying machines all around. Shops for clothing and accessories were also present. In the end of the main avenue was the highest building of all. It was the intelligence center of the Valley of the Builders. The group went there straight.

Inside the building, they entered an elevator, which resembled a cage. It went up with incredible speed to the top floor. There, a black man was waiting for them. He greeted them and smiled especially to

Aurora. Everyone sat at the large table in the room.

“Without further delay, I’ll present our plan,” Augusta spoke.

“And the prisoner?” asked Aurora.

“He has an honest heart, he would be able to help us,” Octavius replied.

Silence filled the room.

“We should believe what the magician says,” Augusta said, breaking the silence.

“The boy will be able to guide as inside the enemy’s camp,” the black man suggested.

“Certainly. Going forward, the group will use submarine to travel at the bottom of the river to Paraguay. There, we will enter the military base mounted on an islet. The mission is to rescue the governor of the Mato Grosso province, Frederico Carneiro de Campos.”

For the first time since they arrived, Magdalene spoke.

“How many people attending will be executing this plan?” she asked.

“Only your group and Manuel.”

Manuel was the name of the black man. Slavery was then legal in Brazil but when the builders heard rumors about blacks who had the same gift as them, they rescued them from the farms and took them to the valley.

“You must leave immediately. We don’t have much time!”

Manuel immediately led them to another room. It has weapons of all sizes and types. Xavier took a big gun, which needed to be handled with care. Aurora chose a bronze one. Magdalene held the highest number of paraphernalia. Octavius chose to only use his magic staff.

The crew entered the submarine after saying goodbye to Augusta. Also powered by steam, it was capable of

sailing fast. They arrived at the location after a short time. There, they kept the submarine submerged and they all swam to the surface. Xavier guided them to a place which didn't have that many guards. When they were there however, they were surprised by Paraguayan soldiers.

“He brought us into a trap!” Aurora cried.

“I did not know there would be guards here!”

Octavius petrified the group of soldiers.

“Well, they now know we're here,”
Magdalene said.

“Let’s go to the most guarded cell. Certainly, the governor is there!” Xavier suggested.

“Don’t trust him!” Aurora said.

“He is the only one who knows the way!” Manuel argued.

The group had no choice but to followed Xavier. At the center of the island was a huge prison. The plan was to reach the highest room. Quickly, they ran towards the area, directly facing every enemy they encountered. Aurora shot several of the soldiers who first attacked them. The gun she used was able to fire several shots at the same time. Manuel used electricity to fire lightning, which hit half of the enemy troops. Xavier hit the rest with clean shots using the firearm he carried.

“Give us cover! We’ll go ahead to the cell!” Octavius shouted.

He then grabbed Magdalene by the arm as she fired at enemies who tried to hit them on the ground. When they reached the cells, they saw Frederico. Magdalene shouted his name. She brought out a small object, which looked like a pen, from one of her pockets. It let out a bright light, which melted part of the wall.

“Hold on to me!” Magdalene said.

Frederico did what he was told. After that, the three of them ran towards the submarine. Magdalene motioned for the rest of the group to retreat. They all dived into the water and left quickly. None of

them was hurt. They took the governor with them to the Valley of the Builders.

“Governor! I’m glad to see you!” Augusta greeted.

“Me too, my lady. I’m curious to know the heroes who saved me though.”

“You may know but we would have to kill you afterwards.”

Frederico was shocked by her response.

“But why?”

“We have to keep this type of technology safe from anyone who might use it for destruction. No one can know of our existence.”

“I understand the situation. I will do what is necessary for the good of this country,” he answered.

“Xavier would also have to stay here.”

“Yes, don’t leave,” Magdalene said.

“Yes, you should stay here,” Aurora said.

“Magdalene, go and be happy! Don’t stay away from your Xavier!”

The two embraced. Octavius, seeing that the sisters were happy and that Magdalene have found a person she could love, felt his mission was over.

“My mission here is over. I will now return to my dimension.”

After speaking, Octavius vanished into thin air. Magdalene tried to reach him to bid farewell to the friend who have protected them for so long but in her heart she felt that he would always come when she needs him. Their fates were connected as told by the prophecy in Azura. In addition to that, he has their belongings from their old home.

The war continued between Brazil and Paraguay. Many innocent lives were lost. In the end, Paraguay lost and was devastated. The Valley of the Builders,

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on the other hand, still remains intact and untouched even after the war. This is thanks to the brave locals who are always willing to protect the site, including Magdalene, Aurora, and Xavier.