The Tale of Neyunn

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Layower, or anyone connected to him, must suffer. It is the rules. I wrote this a few years ago (I'd have been about 12), so not my best work.

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The Tale of Neyunn : Chapter 1

ï¿½ï¿½ Layower Autumnfield liked New Zealand.ï¿½ It was better than his old home, in Mexico.ï¿½ His family was from England however, so people sometimes got confused when he told them.

ï¿½ï¿½ His parents were called Valerie and William.ï¿½ He didn't have any brothers or sisters.ï¿½ He used to have an older sister, but not any more.ï¿½ She'd died in Mexico.ï¿½ They didn't talk about it.

ï¿½ï¿½ He had recently celebrated his 13th birthday.ï¿½ It was hardly a celebration though, only 2 of the 18 people he invited bothered to arrive.ï¿½ He wasn't very popular at his school.

ï¿½ï¿½ He had brown hair and blue eyes, small ears and a long nose.ï¿½ And he had freckles.ï¿½ He hated it when he was bullied for that.ï¿½ It wasn't as if he even had that many.

ï¿½ï¿½ Layower spent his weekends at his Aunt and Uncle's farm.ï¿½ He liked it there, he enjoyed helping out.ï¿½ He normally lived in small town, called Neyunn which seemed to him very isolated from the world.ï¿½ Tourists never came, he rarely met anyone new and a worrying amount of people kept moving away.ï¿½ Layower would be joining them in just 1 year, when he'd be moving back to England where he'd been born.

ï¿½ï¿½ It was a bad place to found a town, Layower thought.ï¿½ It was in the middle of a clump of hills, with only one road joining up to a big motorway.ï¿½ He didn't know why his parents had chosen Neyunn to more to.ï¿½ It was such a boring place that even they didn't like it much.ï¿½ His Dad's company were planning to set up a branch nearby but it never happened.ï¿½ They paid him 30,000 New Zealand dollars for the inconvenience and given him a place in a branch in England, which was why he was moving.

ï¿½ï¿½ Another reason he hated Neyunn was because he was lonely there.ï¿½ He had no friends and rarely spoke to anyone besides his parents.ï¿½ Everyone though him strange.

Chapter 2

Layower stormed into the house after a disastrous day of school.

"Bad day?" Dad asked.

"Extremely," Layower replied, flinging himself onto the sofa.

"What happened?" Mum asked.

"Oh the usual, got blamed for setting the school turtle free, got threatened by the older boys," Layower replied.

"That's not right," Dad said.

"They were just idle threats," Layower replied. "Anyway, I'm going to the farm."

"What about your homework?" Mum asked. Layower had a pile of homework he'd decided to leave until later.

"I'll take it with me," Layower replied. He dropped some jotters into his school bag and went out the door.

After he'd left, Mum said, "William, I'm getting worried about him. Getting blamed for setting the school turtle free! He's being bullied."

"I know. How about I arrange an appointment with his headmaster?" Dad replied.

"That would be good," Mum said.

Layower tripped into a ditch on his way to the farm so he arrived soaking wet. His Aunt got 5 hairdryers to dry him off!

His Aunt was called Bella. His Uncle was called Robert. Aunt Bella was his Mum's sister. She's met Robert on a trip to New Zealand and he'd convinced her to move in with him on his farm. They'd had one son, but he'd moved away to go to University years ago.

"Could you go and collect some eggs from the hen house?" Uncle Robert asked. "And then could you move Van into the field I told you about yesterday?"

"Sure," Layower replied. Van was their only cow, and Layower wondered why she was named that.

He put the eggs into the fridge and moved Van out of her current field. A rabbit ran past him as he did that. There were a lot of rabbits on the hill. It really annoyed his Aunt and Uncle but he couldn't see why.

Then all of a sudden Van screamed an agonising scream and fell onto the ground. Layower saw she'd tripped on a rabbit hole. Her leg was bleeding.

"What happened?" Uncle Robert shouted. "I heard the scream."

"Van tripped!" Layower said.

"It looks broken!" cried Aunt Bella.

"Layower, I suggest you go home now," Uncle Robert said, looking angry. Layower wanted to argue but he knew not to cross his uncle. He collected his unfinished homework and left.

There was no vet in Neyunn. The nearest vet was many miles away, and very expensive. Van needed a vet to recover, and was in a lot of pain. Uncle Robert had to shoot her to put her out of misery the next day.

Layower was very upset. He'd loved that cow. She was roughly the same age as him. He'd remembered in previous visits to Neyunn that he'd spend hours talking with her. And her death was his faultâ ¦

His Aunt and Uncle were less happy about him going to visit. They made him do easy jobs and most of the time he did nothing. He started going less and less until he eventually stopped altogether. The farm used to be the only thing he enjoyed in life. Without that he had nothing to be happy about. He still had 11 months until he moved.

Chapter 3

Layower once had a pen-pal, back when he was in Mexico. He had lost contact some years ago. Her name had been Harriet.

He preferred New Zealand to Mexico. He'd managed to convince his Dad to cancel the appointment at the school, as he didn't think it was important enough (they only called him "Stinkower"). Life had become worse since he'd stopped visiting his Aunt and Uncle's farm though and he'd become incredibly lonely. At least he'd had friends in Mexico.

He rarely got letters. He sometimes got them from his Granny in Mexico, and he had some distant cousins in America who occasionally wrote but that was it.

A month after Van broke her leg Layower's Dad received a letter. It was from his sister, Carol, who was Layower's Aunt, and also lived in America. He let Layower read it. It saidâ ¦

Dear William,

I have recently moved into a new house, so I thought I'd send the new phone number by letter. It's 82291 831 903 453. I'm also wondering how you are, as I haven't heard from you since you moved. I would quite like to visit you, because I've never been to New Zealand and the last time I saw Layower he was tiny.

I know it's difficult to move on after Diana, but it's been 2 years now so I'm hoping life's getting back to normal.

Dillim I don't think has ever met Layower, so it'll be interesting to see if they get along.

I hope you are well, love from Carol.

Dillim was her son, and was roughly Layower's age. Layower had never met him before.

Layower's Dad later phoned Aunt Carol telling her a visit would be good and she could use the guest bedroom.

One day when Aunt Bella had come over for tea (Uncle Robert was ill so he couldn't come) the topic arose.

"How long are they staying?" Aunt Bella asked.

"For most of the summer holidays," Mum replied.

"It'll be interesting to meet them," said Aunt Bella, who'd never met them before. "When are they arriving?"

"They're arriving at the airport tonight, and they're staying in a hotel until tomorrow," Mum explained.

The nearest airport was an hour's drive away.

Aunt Bella left early to go and care for Uncle Robert. After Dinner they all sat down and watched TV.

"Let's watch the news first," Dad said.

"The news!" Layower exclaimed. "I'm off to bed."

Layower walked upstairs into his room. He got into bed and turned off the light.

In what felt like seconds he heard shriek from downstairs. He got up quickly, banged into his wardrobe, turned on the light and ran downstairs.

"What's wrong, what happened?" Layower said quickly. His Dad was crying. His Mum was pointing at the TV. Layower looked at it. It had a picture of a half destroyed plane.

"We have found 16 survivors in the wreckage," the newsreader was saying. "And over 30 bodies. There are over 50 who are awaiting an ambulance. There's still about 80 we haven't accounted for but we believe half of them are dead. Firemen are trying to put out the fire before it reaches the fuel, which we think could cause an explosion-" Layower stopped listening at that point.

"That's the plane Aunt Carol and Dillim was on wasn't it?" he asked.

Mum nodded. Layower had a sudden rush of fear. He didn't want another death in the family. He'd never seen Dad cry like that. Carol was his sister after all. He didn't know what to do or what would happen. He just felt scared.

Chapter 4

Aunt Carol and Dillim had survived, but were in hospital. They had been in the back of the plane and the front had crashed into the ground, killing everyone in there. Most people in the middle were killed and some at the back died.

Dad had gone to visit them at the hospital. He'd left 2 hours ago, and Layower was entertaining himself by playing chess with his Mum. He felt very worried though and couldn't play so his Mum kept beating him. The hospital had said Dillim was so injured there was a chance he'd die. Aunt Carol would probably live.

The door opened and Dad walked in.

"Are they alright?" Layower asked.

"Carol is ok, but Dillim isn'tâ ¦" Dad began.

"Isn't what!" Mum cried.

"He'll live," Dad said. "But he's been badly scarred."

"How?" Layower asked. "Did it hurt?"

"He was unconscious at the time," Dad said. "It was during the operation, they did it too late to avoid scars."

"Is it bad, like on his face?" Layower asked.

Dad sighed. "Yes, it is bad. He's barely recognisable."

"Well that won't bother me I've never met him before," Layower said.

"He really is quite ugly though," Dad said. "Not good for the squeamish."

"I'm not squeamish," Layower said coolly.

"What about Carol?" Mum asked.

"She had a dislocated arm but they sorted that out," Dad said.

"How long will they be in there for?" Mum asked.

"They'll want to keep Dillim there for 3 weeks. I think they're staying here as planned, they're both too scared to go on a plane for a while," Dad explained.

Carol was discharged in 2 days. She stayed in the guest bedroom as planned. She visited Dillim everyday. The nearest hospital was 2 hours drive away.

One day Dad suggested she'd take Layower to meet Dillim. On the Friday before Dillim could leave Layower walked into the hospital preparing not to feel sick when he saw Dillim. Layower hoped it wouldn't look too bad.

The nurse took them in. He was lying in bed with a curtain around him.

"Why's the curtain around him?" Layower asked.

"He doesn't want them to look at him," the nurse said. "I don't know why, the swelling has gone down and he looks much better. She pulled the curtain away. Dillim was sitting there, reading. Layower felt slightly awkward.

He didn't look that ugly. He did have about 3 long scars winding round his face but he was recognisable from pictures he'd seen. There must have been bad swelling.

"Umâ ¦hello," Layower said.

"Hi, I guess," Dillim said unenthusiastically.

"I'll leave you two to chat," Aunt Carol said. She walked out. Layower wished she hadn't.

He didn't want to start off talking about the crash, like most people did. Instead, he said, "This city looks better than Neyunn."

"Hmm," Dillim said. There was an awkward pause. Then, he said "Do you think I look ugly?"

"Well, yes," Layower replied. Dillim sighed.

"But I get told at school by bullies that I'm ugly as well, so I've learnt not to judge by looks," he continued.

"That's good," Dillim replied.

"When is it you can leave?" Layower asked, making small talk.

"Tuesday," Dillim replied.

Aunt Carol walked into the room. "It's nice to see you two are talking," she said. "But I think it's time to leave."

"Well, bye," Layower said.

"Yeah," Dillim replied.

On Tuesday Dillim left the hospital and stayed in Layower's house. He was due to stay a month, then he'd go back to America.

After a while Layower and Dillim became friends. They seemed to have similar hobbies, they both liked the same food and they both liked travelling. Layower just dreaded when Dillim had to leave.

Chapter 5

Uncle Robert was 64. Aunt Bella was 59. They'd met 25 years ago on a holiday. They'd both been married before but had had no children. Layower had heard about Aunt Bella's old husband. From what his Mum used to say he was an alcoholic that spent his life in pubs getting arrested.

Uncle Robert's wife had died over 30 years ago in a freak fire. It had been caused by sunlight shining through a piece of glass on a really hot day. The whole farm had burnt down.

Uncle Robert's family had lived on that farm for 4 generations. They wanted their son, called Phillip, to inherit the farm. He didn't want to though and had gone to university. This had upset Uncle Robert bit, and when Phillip went back they'd had an argument. They didn't speak to each other any more. Since then he'd been getting depressed a lot and getting ill. He said it was just stress.

Eight days after Dillim left the hospital him and Layower went to visit the farm for the first time since Layower had stopped going. His excuse was to show Dillim around, but he really just wanted to see it all again.

Layower showed him the chickens first. He felt nostalgic, watching them. He left the cows for last; he worried he'd cry when he got to them. He didn't.

They'd got a new cow. Aunt Bella was feeding it; Uncle Robert was ill again.

"When did you get this?" Layower said, more rudely than he'd meant.

"Well, since we didn't have one any more we needed a new one. You'd know that if you still came," Aunt Bella said. She'd been a bit nasty to Layower since Van's death; she'd liked her as well.

"We called it Van II," she continued. Layower felt a tear run down his cheek.

"It's almost tea time," he said to Dillim. "Weâ ¦we should leave." Layower just wanted to get away from the farm as fast as he could.

"But you haven't shown me the hill yet," Dillim said. It was the hill Van had broken here leg.

"There's nothing up there," Layower said. "Come on-."

"I bet there's a good view though," Dillim carried on.

"Well I'm starving," Layower lied. "You can stay but I'm going home."

"Oh alright, can we come another day?" Dillim sighed.

"Of course, you're always welcome," Aunt May said. Layower didn't think she actually disliked him, she was just taking out her anger about Van and Phillip on him.

When they arrived home, to Layower's annoyance, his Mum had invited Aunt Bella and Uncle Robert for tea.

They arrived at 7. Uncle Robert was looking poorly but he said he was alright. All 7 of them sat down on the table.

"Has Layower told you about Van?" Aunt Bella asked Dillim. Layower suddenly felt very hot and wanted to leave.

"Van? What van?" Dillim asked.

"It's nothing importantâ ¦" mumbled Layower.

"It's very important!" Aunt Bella said.

"I need to toilet then!" Layower said. He got up and left. He hid in the corridor and listened. After a while he went back. They were talking about politics.

"Layower, I'm sorry about Van," Dillim said as he entered.

Layower said nothing for the next 10 minutes.

"So how are you getting back?" Mum asked Carol.

"Well-" she began.

"AARRHH!!"

"Uncle Robert?"

"Robert!"

Layower could never remember much else about that night. Uncle Robert had grabbed his chest and fallen onto the ground. Dad had phoned an ambulance but Uncle Robert died before they arrived.

He had a heart problem, which had been the real reason he kept getting ill. It had been made worse with the stress of Phillip.

It was the second saddest moment of Layower's life. After Diana he hadn't thought he could cope with another death. He had to.

The funeral was scheduled to be one week later. Layower was dreading it.

Chapter 6

The car drove along the bumpy road. It was such a contrast to the smooth motorway. The funeral was in a town far away that Uncle Robert had been fond of.

In the car were Layower, his Dad, Dillim and Aunt Bella. His Mum, Aunt Carol and one of Uncle Robert's friends were in the car behind them.

"This is the last thing we needed, afterâ ¦" His Dad said but tailed off towards the end.

"Absolutely terribleâ ¦" Carol said.

Layower felt himself crying. Dillim was just sitting with a blank expression, not sure what to say.

They arrived, and went into the church.

"Is Phillip coming?" Mum asked. Layower had never though about him, which seemed stupid of him.

"I don't know," Aunt Bella said, then bursting into tears (again). "M, m, my f, first husband was an id, idiot! My s, second is dead! W, Wha!"

"He'd better come, or..." Dad said.

"Or what?" Layower asked.

"Or, um, we'll never speak to him again".

"How old was he?" Dillim asked.

"64," Dad answered.

"Too young," sobbed Aunt Bella.

The funeral lasted half an hour. It seemed sadder than when Diane died. But she didn't have a funeral; they hadn't found her bodyâ ¦

Phillip arrived, but only stayed for the funeral and left straight afterwards before Aunt Bella could talk to him. This upset her.

When it ended they went back to the car to decide what to do next.

"There are some nice views around here," Dad said to Mum. "Maybe I could take the kids to see those and you can take Bella home,"

"Ok, I'll take Carol as well, she's quite shaken up," Mum replied. "Will you get the bus back?" There was a bus that ran twice a week to Neyunn.

"Yeah, ok." Dad said.

"The views" turned out to be some cliffs. It was very foggy, so there wasn't a view. There was a tour guide telling them about how the natives had used these cliffs to look out for enemies.

"And it was very effective too," he said.

"Why are we learning about history when my uncle-in-law has just had his funeral?" Dillim said quietly. It wasn't quiet enough.

"Not enjoying this, young man?" he asked Dillim.

"No, I meant-" He began.

"I think we'll leave now," Dad said. "This wasn't what we had in mind. Sorry."

They took a shortcut back to the car. They couldn't read the sign because of the fog (it was really thick) but there was a footpath, so it couldn't be bad. They were wrong.

As they were wandering through the fog Dillim screamed and fell onto the ground.

"What is it!" yelled Dad.

"There's a cliff there, I almost fell in!" he cried.

"There's grass here, it's away from the cliff," Layower said, pointing at a green patch even though they could see him.

"Layower, where are you?" Dad asked. He must have been far away, it was quiet.

"I'm here, Dad, where are you!" Layower replied. Dad must not have heard him. He didn't know how he'd got so far away so quickly.

"Layower?" he asked. Then he screamed.

"Mr Autumfield!" Layower could just hear Dillim say.

He tried to find them, following the voices; except the voices had stopped. There was silence. No birds, or people; not even the sound of the sea. There was complete silence.

"Dad?" Layower cried. "Dillim!"

He ran; he ran as fast as he could; which was stupid, considering the cliff was near. But Layower wasn't thinking straight. He saw the cliff and pulled to a halt.

"DAD!" he shouted. He then looked around. There was more silence. He could faintly make out the waves of the sea crashing into rock metres underneath him.

"Layower!" he heard in the distance. It was Dillim!

"Dillim, is that you?" he asked.

"Yes, but your Dad-" he began.

"What happened to him!" Layower screamed. He didn't mean to scream, it just came out.

"I don't know, I think he fell off!"

Noâ ¦that couldn't have happened; Dad dead? Layower couldn't take any more. He felt himself start shaking, and the ground was spinning.

"Layower!" Dillim shouted.

"I don't feel well!" he shouted. Everything seemed to happening fast. "Iâ ¦"

"Look, the fog's clearing," Dillim said.

To Layower this wasn't good, because then he'd see the body.

"Mr Autumfield!" Dillim shouted. There was silence again, except for the waves.

"I see something," Layower said. It looked like a dead body. Only dead bodies don't moveâ ¦

"He's alive!" Layower shouted.

"Mr Autumfield!" Dillim shouted again.

"Dillim?" he said weakly. Layower could see him, the fog was clearing.

"Dad, are you ok?" Layower shouted down.

"Yeah, I have tons of cuts and bruises though," he said.

"How are you going to get up?" Dillim asked.

"We're going to miss the bus," Layower said. This wouldn't have occurred to the average person, who'd just be glad their Dad was alright, but Layower wasn't the average person.

"Does that matter?" Dillim shouted.

Layower's Dad started climbing up.

"I think I can get a grip," he said.

After about 5 minutes he climbed up.

"We'd better run, I can see the bus!" Dad shouted. He couldn't run though, and the boys had to help him stay up.

They waved at the bus, which was just leaving. The bus driver saw them and stopped.

"Are you alright?" He asked Dad when he limped onto the bus.

"Yeah, I just had a fall," he replied. Then he covered his face with his hands.

"I must have left my wallet at the bottom of the cliff.

"The tide was coming in," Layower said. Again, he was surprised that under the circumstances he'd noticed that.

"I have some money in my pocket," Dillim said. It was just enough to pay for the trip.

"Thank you Dillim!" Dad said when they sat down.

Layower could see why the bus driver was surprised when he saw dad, he had blood stained all over his shirt.

Eventually they arrived, and Layower and Dillim helped Dad into the house. Mum and Aunt Carol got a shock when they saw him.

"It's just one thing after another!" shrieked Mum. "First Diane, then Van, then the crash, Robert, and now this!"

She was hysterical for quite a while.

Eventually they recovered from it, and normal life began. Aunt Bella had to sell the farm; she couldn't do the work on her own. Layower offered to help, but she still didn't trust him. She said she was retiring.

By that point Dillim only had a few days left. Dillim was Layower's only friend, and from what he had said, in America he didn't have many friends either. His school was tiny (smaller than the one in Neyunn) and all the people there smoked and took drugs.

Layower was still being bullied at his school. He had 10 months before the move to Englandâ¦

Chapter 7

Dillim and Carol were getting home by boat, but the boat had been cancelled for another week. Layower had suggested that they buy a house in Neyunn (house prices were lower than they had been in 30 years!) but Carol had "a life" in America she couldn't leave.

Unfortunately Layower became sick for a few days and couldn't enjoy the last few days he had with Dillim. Dillim had started going to the school in the last week, and oddly fitted right in. He became quite popular, and he wished he could stay and live with Layower and his family. Carol wouldn't allow it though.

Layower was jealous of Dillim's popularity, but they stayed friends, which stopped Layower thinking he'd abandon him.

A girl in their class, called Katerina (who was also very popular), was having a birthday party just before term ended. That was on the day before Dillim left.

"Do you think we'll be invited?" Layower asked Dillim two days before the party. "I heard she'd accidentally left people off the list."

"I doubt it," Dillim said. He picked his bag out of the bag box and opened it.

"I've been invited!" he said.

Layower looked in his bag. There was nothing in it besides a packed lunch and overdue history homework.

"I haven't," he said sadly.

"It says I can bring a guest, so I could take you," Dillim said.

"You sure?" Layower exclaimed.

"Yeah, who else would I ask?" Dillim replied.

The school ended early, and Layower and Dillim went home to watch TV.

"And to retaliate, the missiles destroyed the entire city!" the newsreader droned on.

"Does it matter what we wear?" Layower asked.

"Out of which there were only 8 survivorsâ ¦"

"Probably, I'd wear the best thing we have," Dillim replied.

"And the citizens ofâ ¦Australian policeâ ¦New Zealandâ ¦"

"This is boring," Layower said, turning the TV off.

"What was that about?" Dillim asked.

"Some Australian nutter bombing people," Dad said, who had just appeared at the door. "Shouldn't affect us."

The party started at 7 and ended at 11. It was at the public hall.

"Are those girls drinking vodka?" Layower asked as they arrived. "Isn't that illegal?"

"Probably, but someone always gets supplies in. Then they get arrested for causing a stir," Dillim said as if it was a security protocol. On seeing Layower's face he said "Standard procedure back in America."

The party for Layower was boring. Unless you like alcohol and getting deafened by music, he didn't see how anyone could enjoy this. It was terrible. People were drunk, and there were no adults anywhere. People were getting into arguments and fights.

"Maybe we should leave," Layower said to Dillim.

"Why?" he asked. "It's-"

There was a scream; a loud one. It came from the back of the hall; everyone was crowding round. There was red paint on the floorâ ¦or blood.

The person that screamed was lying on the floor clutching his stomach.

"He's hurt!" someone shouted.

"Stabbed!" another cried.

There was a boy, about only 13 years old, with a knife in his hand. He dropped the knife and ran out the fire exit, causing the fire alarm to go off (it was wired up to the alarm).

"Everyone out!" some guy with gray hair said, coming into the room. Then he saw the boy on the floor.

"What happened?" he asked.

"He's been stabbed!" someone shouted.

"You call the ambulance!" he said to a girl near Layower. "And you," he said to Layower. "Phone the police!"

Layower had never had to do anything like this before.

"What service do you require?" a voice said.

"Um, police!" he exclaimed. There was a brief wait. The girl phoning the ambulance was in the room next door. Layower could hear her, and recognised her as Katerina. She sounded scared.

"Hello, this is Neyunn police station, how may we help?" a man said on the phone.

"S, someone's been stabbed!" Layower said.

"Where are you?" he asked.

"The hall," Layower said. He could hear the sirens of the ambulance arriving. The boy's friends were crying, while other people were skipping (obviously drunk).

"Could you give us details of the event?" he asked. "This will not delay the police."

"I, I don't know," he said. "There was a scream and then I saw him on the floor,"

"Who stabbed him?" the policeman asked (or Layower assumed he was a policeman, he sounded like a sheriff).

"There was this boy, he ran out the fire exit," he explained. He heard the siren of a fire engine arriving. The fire alarm must have triggered some automatic dispatch system.

"Are you still there!" the policeman said.

"Yes, sorry," Layower apologized. "He had glasses and brown hair. I don't really know who he is," He heard the siren of a police car outside.

"The car arrived!" Layower cried.

"Ok, they'll deal with it," the man said before putting the phone down. Layower ran into the main hall. Most people had left in fear of getting in trouble for having alcohol.

"The ambulance took Will," Dillim said. Will must have been the boy that got stabbed "And the fire engine left."

"What about the boy that stabbed him?" Layower asked.

"The Barman is talking to them," he replied.

They went home after that and told their shocked parents. It had been a disastrous way to celebrate Dillim leaving.

Chapter 8

Will died. An hour after he'd arrived at the hospital apparently. The knife had gone through his heart and one of his lungs (he'd been stabbed twice). The school was given a week off because of it.

The boy that had stabbed Will (Eilarch) had been found on the motorway 25 kilometres away! The police had said he'd had to be running extremely fast for over 5 hours to get there that quickly. He was given a 20-year sentence in jail and he was to get mental help.

Dillim and Carol's boat left at 6pm, Dillim was having a last look around the town. The man who bought the farm let them have a look around it as long as they didn't break anything.

"It's all changed," Layower noticed. "The hen house has been replaced with an ugly metal one, and they're using *machines* to milk the cows! It's discraceful."

"All farms nowadays are like that," Dillim said.

They left after only 10 minutes, and Layower vowed never to go back there. It was starting to get dark, so they went home.

When Dillim left Layower would have 9 and half months of loneliness. Whenever he talked to people at his school they hid stuff in their pockets and ran off. He hoped that someone new would move to Neyunn, but it was in the middle of nowhere. A boy called Francis had moved to Neyunn 3 weeks ago, but by 5 days Layower caught him smoking with his new friends.

It had got dark surprisingly quickly. And there was nobody outside, when usually at least the milkman's son would be around vandalising the wall under the bridge.

When they went into the house all the lights were off.

"Mum? Dad!" Layower called.

"SSHHH!" someone cried. Layower turned on a light.

"Turn that off!" Dad shouted and slammed his hand against the switch.

"What?" whispered Dillim.

"We have to be quiet," Aunt Carol, whispered back.

"Layower, remember when I said there was that guy killing people in Australia?" Dad said. Layower nodded.

"Well, he relocated here and has hundreds of aeroplanes and bombs," Dad continued. The government don't know how he got them, but they think he going to blitz all the towns and cities he can!"

"Why!" Layower cried, quietly.

"He's mad," Dad replied.

"Where's Aunt Valerie?" Dillim asked.

"She was among the randomly chosen to be an air raid warden," Dad said.

"That's just like in the war," Layower exclaimed.

"I know. This isn't a war though, just terrorism. Now we need to be quiet!"

Nobody said anything for hours. Layower had never heard his Dad sound more scared. In the silence, Layower had plenty of time to think. He seemed to be cursed. First, when he was in Mexico when he almost drowned and was lost for days, then the rock-climbing and Diana, then he moved to Neyunn. His luck had got even worse there. Van, the plane crash (which although hadn't involved him, it had happened around him), Uncle Robert, almost dying at the cliffs, Will being stabbed and finally - CRASH!

"What's that!" Dillim shouted.

"They're here, they saw light!" Dad cried.

"Mum's out there!" Layower yelled. BANG. It was closer that time.

"In the towns that were destroyed in Australia, nothing was left!" Dad shouted. BANG. The windows on the East side of their house shattered. BANG! There was crashing from upstairs.

"Shouldn't we evacuate the house?" Layower shouted.

"The bridge outside it sturdy!" Aunt Carol shouted.

The air raid siren started. It was similar to the Second World War ones Layower had heard, yet different. He knew that if it suddenly stopped, his Mum was dead.

They decided to run towards the bridge. Outside, everything seemed to be on fire. The top of their house had been ripped off, and just as they left a flame-bomb landed on it and the house went up.

Before any time had passed, Layower and Dillim had lost everyone else. All they could see was flames. All they could hear was the high-pitched noises of bombs falling.

They got to the bridge, only to find Sarah (a girl in their class) sitting over the body of her dead brother. She was crying.

"Go away!" she shouted.

"This is the only safe place!" Layower shouted. BANG! The ground shook, and Sarah fell into the river, screaming. Dillim almost fell in, but Layower pulled him to the wall. The light of the flash made Layower realise that Sarah was covered in her brother's blood.

"Where does the river go?" Dillim asked.

"Into a lake towards the south, but there's a beech-like area she'll be able to get off at," Layower said. "If she hasn't drowned or been blown up."

Layower was shaking. He could see Dillim was too.

"Do you think we'll die?" Dillim asked.

Layower couldn't answer. He was hoping he wouldn't, but something inside him made him think he would.

They stayed under the bridge for another 5 minutes, without saying anything. Every now and again the bombs stopped, but then the screaming started again.

"Can't the army come?" Layower cried.

"They've probably broken communications or something," Dillim said.

Suddenly there was a massive crash and the bride caved in.

"Jump into the river!" Layower shouted, but it was too late. Dillim had been crushed by a rock. Another one fell and hit Layower on the head, and he fell into the river.

"Dillim!" he shouted. "DILLIM!"

He was being washed down the river and crashed against the rocks. He was getting sorer and sorer. He grabbed onto the first rock he could.

Down the river, he could see a body at the bottom, slowly being washed down. It was Sarah! There was going to be no survivorsâ ¦

Everything started getting darker and darkerâ ¦Layower lost strength to hold onto the rock; he let go. He was washed down the river more, while being bashed more and more. Then, all his senses stopped, he could barely see or hear. He felt water going over his head. Then he felt nothing.

*

It was cold. That was all Layower could feel; coldness.

He tried opening his eyes. It made no difference, everything was black.

"Hello?" he said. He could hardly say anything.

Then, he saw a figure in the darkness.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"You are safe," a familiar female voice said.

"Who are you?" Layower repeated.

"I have been here so long I can hardly remember," she replied.

"Amâ ¦Am I dead?" Layower asked.

"No," she said.

"Then what am I?" he asked.

She said nothing.

Layower walked up to her, his eyes were adjusting to the darkness. He then realised he was wearing different clothes to the ones he was wearing before. It felt like he was wearing nothing, but it also felt like he was wearing a robe of some sort. It was odd.

The woman came into focus; she had brown hair, and was wearing a robe as well, a green one.

"Hello Layower," she said. Then Layower recognised her. It was Diane!

"Diane!" he cried. "But you died!"

"I don't feel dead," she said, smiling.

"How is this possible?" he said.

"We both died," she answered. "And we're here. I think this is an after-world.

Layower looked around. "It's pretty boring."

"This is *an* after-world, but not *the* after-world," she said. "I'm not able to get through to the real one."

"Why not?" Layower asked.

"When I died, when I fell, you thought it was your fault," she explained.

"It was," he said sadly.

"No, it wasn't. My harness broke and I grabbed onto your hand," she said.

"Please, I don't want to go through it again," Layower whined.

"But you didn't let go!," she exclaimed. "I let go of you."

"Why?" he asked.

"I was too heavy, and you were so young," she said. "Your hand was slipping off the rock, and both of us falling would have broken the harness and we'd both have died. I did it to save you."

Layower didn't believe her. He was sure it had been his fault.

"I couldn't get through to the after-world until I'd told you this," she said.

"But you'd have been waiting for years!" Layower exclaimed.

"I could watch what my friends and family were doing," she said. "Would you like to see Neyunn one last time?"

"What, to see who's dead?" he said.

"Yes," she said. "When people die they all go to a separate place like this, and most of them go to and after-world."

"Ok then," he said. The walls suddenly lit up with what looked like Neyunn. It was like watching a film in 360 degrees cinema, except the floor and walls were lit up.

"We're like ghosts," she said. "We're not actually here, but we think we're here. When people see ghosts, they're actually seeing people like us. It's unlikely that we'll be seen though."

There was fire everywhere. Almost all the houses had collapsed, and the ones that hadn't looked like they would soon. The river was stained with blood; was some of it from his body?

"Terrible," Layower mumbled.

"I know," Diane agreed.

They walked (or glided, Layower wasn't sure) towards the broken bridge. Underneath a rock was Dillim. He was dead as well.

"So how do people get from this world to the afterlife?" Layower asked.

"I don't know," Diane replied. "I haven't gone yet. We'll have to find out."

That was one thing Layower had remembered about her; she'd always been optimistic.

"Oh look, there's Mum!" she cried. Their Mum was looking through the wreckage for bodies. She'd soon discover Dillim.

"I don't want to see her find him," Layower said. They glided around a bit more, looking for Dad and Aunt Carol.

After a while they found them putting out the house with fire extinguishers. Or what was left of the house.

"The thing about being in this world is you can look into the past or future for about a week," Diane said. "We could see your funeral."

Before Layower could answer, the scenery changed and he was in a church. He didn't recognise it.

"Layower Autumnfield and Dillim Stangelgo, who died in the fires ofâ ¦" the minister was saying.

"Oh my gosh, this is weirdâ ¦" Layower said. "This is really weird."

"At least you had a funeral," Diane said.

A second later they were back in the darkness.

"Now what?" Layower asked.

"Umâ ¦ I'm not sure," she answered. "Wait, what's that?"

She was pointing at an orange light.

"It looks like a door," he said.

"This is it!" she said excitedly.

"Will we see Dillim there?" Layower asked.

"I have no idea!" she said, grinning. "We might not see them again; we might not see each other again. Or we could be reincarnated, I really have no idea."

Layower gulped. He took one last breath (or he though he did, this world felt so different) and stepped forward.

"Let's go," he said. They walked through the door, leaving the world forever.

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