

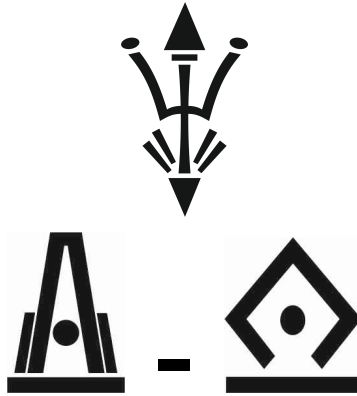




Dedicated

to those who see beyond this world  
and who are big enough dreamers to imagine  
different tribes and unknown wonder worlds!





Atlantis,  
A Wonderful Planet

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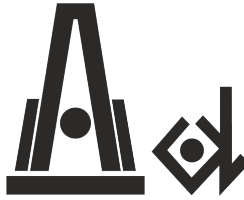
~  
The Legend of Falamanha

Thanos “Alpino” Vasilakis



**TIME TRAVELLER**





## Zylmöhra Atlántido

The planet Atlantis is one of the most distant of the Alatlion galaxy. It is covered entirely by water and inhabited by the most outstanding tribe of this galaxy, well known as the Atlantians or Iglahümi.

Three suns are visible in this planet's sky during daytime, Takälum, Klamänta, and Hëlinor, but the temperatures remain low as the suns are at such a great distance. Of course, this is something that has very little effect on the residents of the planet as they live in underwater colonies which they had created millions of years ago, since the very first day they set foot on this planet.

The Iglahümi are anthropomorphic, like the rest of the tribes of the Alatlion galaxy. The difference is that they have the power to adjust to the environment around them... not to mention anything else that comes their way. This makes them bizarrely beautiful, something that very few around the galaxy have had the privilege to witness.

Arrival and departure from this planet is almost forbidden. Only the Ocean Lord has the jurisdiction to grant admission and whosoever attempts to enter illegally will most likely end up dead. As for those who leave this planet... ninety nine percent are eternally banished as exiles.

The laws of this planet touch on extermination level, something quite different to the inherent nature of the Atlantians. This is why they obey them with reverence; to maintain the balance their ancestors built through great effort.

This planet is so beautiful and rich, underwater, at least, that very few care about what exists on the outside. It also hides many secrets, something that matches quite nicely with the Atlantian power.

Above the water's surface, only a few scattered coral reefs and a floating colony exist. Those areas have been essentially uninhabitable for other tribes for a long time, barring a few unique exceptions.

Another important detail that makes this planet so special is the way in which time affects the residents inside its atmosphere. One oceanic year, *Okianöhra Jaähro*, is equal to dozens on other planets. Just one day on Atlantis is calculated as almost two hundred galactic days.

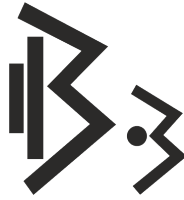
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Each oceanic year is not numbered, like most other planets, but named after the marine animal that has been chosen to be honoured. When a specific animal is chosen multiple times, they add an extra characteristic which differentiates them all.

Thus, its time and countless secrets have ensured many past attempts by others to destroy this planet. After all, they couldn't live there themselves and learn those very secrets.

That's why the ancestors of this tribe decided to earn their freedom, the first opportunity they got and isolate themselves peacefully. This opportunity finally came when the Twelve Atlantian Warlords ended the first Intergalactic War and brought peace to the Alatlion galaxy.





## Tëlmonur kái Gargandädre

A husky man was walking slowly through a breezy, dark tunnel. His steps were very heavy, equal to his years of age, which very few knew the exact number of. His back was gigantic and his arms looked like thick navy ropes, frayed and hairy. His legs resembled tree trunks which had been submerged in water and were now covered in moss, lichens, and grey scales. His toes were webbed. His torso was completely covered with tattoos, long lines which crossed and intersected each other to create irregular shapes. His peculiar presence was complete with a long grey beard, entirely covering his lips, his long, messy, grey hair, and his bright blue eyes which shone through the darkness.

The tunnel was semicircular, every surface covered with drawings, of a sort, depicting ancient battles of the tribe and its heroes. The floor, however, was a totally smooth rock covered by eight inches of water.

The husky man walked wearily and made his way to the end of the tunnel, raised his head, and looked up. At a distance of thirty-three feet above him was the only exit out of that tunnel. However, no ladder was in sight, nor anything else that he could use to climb.

He then lifted his hands and started moving them like a professional dancer; with simplicity, harmony, and plasticity. The movement began from his shoulders and moved smoothly, all the way through to his fingertips. It was quite a remarkable sight for a huge guy like him.

If someone were to have watched him, without, of course, any knowledge of who he was, they might have believed they were witness to a gigantic, retired ballet dancer warming up for his first performance after many years. What followed, however, betrayed his true identity.

The water inside the tunnel started dancing to the rhythm of his hands, gathering around him and creating small whirlpools. The more the water approached him, the higher he was lifted, all the way up, to the exit. When he arrived at the top, he saw the sun's rays bathing the entrance, or exit, of the cave. The moment he set foot on solid ground, the water stopped dancing and fell back in its original place.

He started walking with the same lethargy, despite the knowledge that people awaited him outside the cave. He had no reason to rush.

As he exited, he walked all the way to the edge of the steep rock, the height of which exceeded everything surrounding it. Right below was a natural pool, surrounded by a packed coral amphitheater.

Everyone started cheering upon seeing him, creating a deafening noise reminiscent of a splash. He didn't respond to their love, he simply allowed his body to fall from the cliff, almost a hundred feet above the water's surface. His body fell unrestrained but not a soul in the amphitheater seemed scared, including the man himself. Still, the crowd collectively held their breath at the exact moment before he crashed into the water's surface.

Fractions of seconds before the impact, the water rushed to the side and created a water sphere that affectionately hugged the man, stopping his fall and protecting him. For a few seconds he disappeared from their view, but he quickly jumped out of the water with force and into the only empty coral stand in front of the amphitheater.

The crowd started to shout with endless adoration, like they were right in front of the most beloved rock star at a concert. The splash-like noise was heard again; the crowd held some sort of conch-trumpets aloft, blowing inside them to spread the sound across the area and beyond. Once he stood to his full stature, everything stopped with a hush.

He didn't speak right away; he wanted to enjoy the silence for a moment and ensure that everyone was present. When he completed his scanning, he filled his lungs with air and said, in a heavy and loud voice: "The Gods sent the Naturalists to fill this planet with water. They made him beautiful, like no other, and loved him like their own! Then, they handed him over to us, to live in and protect him while all their secrets were hidden here! Guardians of those secrets and all of human existence..."

His voice reached not only the furthest of his audience, but surpassed the amphitheater, it was so crystal-clear and strong that it covered a mile range.

"We fought for our freedom, but also for inactivity. To be able to lock ourselves away from the envy that the Empire brings to the galaxy, creating wars, jealousy, and hatred... *One with the water!*" He finished by shouting, the shockwaves of his voice causing the surface of the water to tremble, both inside and outside the coral amphitheater.

"One with the water," the audience repeated in perfect synchronicity.

"Iglahümi of the Trumöhra colony, the harvest day, well known as Tëlmonur käi Gargandädre of Grey Orca's year has arrived!" He continued in his deep and steady voice. "Have you pick your chosen one?"

The crowd started rhythmically pounding their feet on the coral reef, generating a creepy sound that was reminiscent of a prelude to battle! Then, through the water, between the stand and the amphitheater a huge vermilion octopus with white suction cups appeared. However, its eyes were also white; it was blind.

Four of his tentacles were tightened in such a way that they created some sort of a throne, on which sat a very skinny young boy of around eleven years old.

He had curly brown hair, a pair of light-brown eyes that glowed in the suns, and smooth brown skin. His face was sweet and handsome, quite the opposite of his expression which seemed sour and irritated.

“What is your name, young man?” He asked in his same steady and heavy voice.

“Krukövia,” the boy answered in annoyance without looking at him.

Much of the crowd held their collective breath, realising the young man’s impiety, but the leader of this planet didn’t seem to be bothered. He could perfectly understand the reasons for this behaviour.

“A time will come when you’ll be thankful to all those who have chosen you.” His next words were, “Anger is always a good motive to succeed, but only if you conquer it and use it as an energy source! Otherwise, it will destroy you,” he ended, once again proving his wisdom. The young man didn’t seem to embrace his words; he acted like he wasn’t even listening. He just turned his back and started combing the crowd, looking for his parents.

An old but strapping man with a long beard that looked like tentacles made his way out of the crowd and all the way to the edge of the amphitheater. Once he arrived, he bowed and started to say: “Lord of the Ocean, forgive this young...”

“Save your words, master Plokami,” the man interrupted him. “There is no reason for you, or anyone else, to justify it! There were more disrespectful Iglahümi throughout my reign, some already heroes of our tribe! When I first met them, they were just as inconspicuous as young Krukövia.”

When the Ocean Lord finished speaking, he brought two of his fingers to his mouth and whistled sharply. Seconds later, an emerald-skinned seven-foot-long dolphin appeared with a saddle strapped to its back.

The Iglahümi of the Trumöhra colony didn’t pay any attention to the dolphin, but the huge vermilion octopus paid its respects to the royal mammal.

The Ocean Lord turned to the dolphin and started talking in a strange fish language, moving his hands in what seemed like gestures which were also unknown to the crowd. When he finished with the instructions, the dolphin approached the octopus.

Once it arrived, the octopus moved its tentacles and arranged young Krukövia on the dolphin's saddle. He sat reluctantly, boiling with anger, and still looking for his parents in the crowd. As soon as the dolphin felt the weight settle on its back, it dove and disappeared along with the youngster.

"Atlantis is in debt to your offer!" The Ocean Lord said for the last time. He looked up, staring at the sun, Hëlinor.

The people of the Trumöhra colony resumed their rhythmic stomping on the coral reef, this time chanting his name: "Vÿthos, Vÿthos, Vÿthos."

He thanked them with a sharp nod of his head and dove into the sea with an elaborate jump. As soon as his body touched the water, he started transforming. Gills appeared on his neck and chest, membranes formed to web his fingers, and his legs conjugated, taking the form of a grey tail.

His course was down to the depths and a bit sideways, as he wanted to move away in terms of both length and breadth. He was swimming faster than any other fish in the ocean. His body cut through the water with great simplicity, after all, he was one of the greatest Atlantians to have ever lived. He went by the nickname Posëidon.

Pallëria 'Posëidon' Vÿthos had been the leader of this planet for more than a lifetime. He had taught many young Atlantians, offering his all to his tribe. The Tëlmonur käi Gargandädre took part only when he decided that their tribe needed new blood in its royal ranks. There were plenty of reasons to do such a thing, more royal soldiers, more royal servants, death, retirement, or exile.

Of course, the selection of every colony did not happen by accident. He sent the details to every single one of them, along with the announcement. Then, the master of every colony had the obligation of wisely making the right choice. One hundred and thirty-two young boys and girls were being collected that day. The lives of those youngsters were about to change radically from that day on, for better or for worse, depending on their character and the way they evolved. It had been proven that truth, power, and, of course, knowledge wasn't for everyone. Some went crazy with the responsibility those three brought, unable to handle it. Others were intoxicated by the power of the authority that they earned. Few could fully realise their role in the community and serve it faithfully.

However, this particular harvest was the most important of all for him: the time had come to find his heir. Of course, this wasn't something that had just recently popped into his mind, he had been looking for an heir since day one of his reign, but he failed to find anyone that met his requirements.

He knew his time was running out. He also knew that he was the last living Atlantian Warlord and the only one without the proper descendant to continue his legacy.

The rest of the Atlantian Warlords not only found their own descendants, but helped the galaxy in other ways, products, weaponry and knowledge. He stayed behind to protect his tribe, his daughter and all the secrets of their wonderful planet.

Sooner or later, the last piece of this brilliant era would be gone. Then the galaxy would be forced to find new protectors and heroes who, in turn, would write their own pages in history.

During the last minutes of the day, exactly like custom defined, Pallëria entered the big gathering hall of the chosen ones. The ceremony had been completed and all one hundred and thirty-two attendants were there.

The hall was one of the most beautiful buildings of all Orhända. Orhända being the biggest underwater colony on Atlantis and the location that housed the Ocean Lord's palace. It was round, with a series of ancient Greek columns that stood three meters high in front of the wall and held up the ceiling, upon which was a scarlet symbol, unknown to most, resembling a bird.

Everything inside was white, even though it was totally covered by water. The floor shone like a mirror and the seats were sculpted shells made from the same material as the columns, all perfectly aligned. The youngsters were sitting on those shells. Some seemed happy, others sullen or simply confused.

He appeared in the hall in an impressive manner, initially hidden from view by the vortex of air and water his spinning swimming motions had created. He headed straight for the only empty shell, the biggest and only one situated ahead of the others. When he sat, the vortex disappeared and his true form was revealed. Most of the youngsters prepared to stand up, but he stopped them with a flick of his right hand.

"Welcome," he started when everyone returned to their seats.

The majority nodded enthusiastically. Some stayed still without even blinking, but one raised his hand and waved at him, smiling. It was an action that surprised everyone. He was thin, like a fishbone, with long black hair down to his waist, a black tail, and a pair of green eyes.

"From this day on, you will have to learn to act like members of this particular colony! Respect is of utmost importance something that comes from your actions, not your words or manners," he started once again, taking the occasion from the young man's movement. "Gestures, smiles, even pilgrimages say nothing to me. However, your actions will shout louder than an echo in a canyon!"

Pallëria completed his speech with pomposity, scaring most of the youngsters. In the past he had tried to teach young inductees with kindness, but in the end, he realised that only fear would produce respect.

“Do you know why you’re here?”

Not a soul raised their hand to answer. They were all terrified, giving the opportunity to shine to the fishbone youngster who was glad to show that he was different to the others. His hand went up.

“Your name and the colony you represent,” Pallëria said, granting him permission to talk.

“My name is Akämbka Lëji and I represent the Agätta colony,” he started with pride, “and the answer is that, we are here, great Posëidon, to be taught by the best and to offer everything we can to our planet and our tribe!”

“We’ve already found our smartass,” he said casually. “Let’s see what else we’ve got here... what do you think you can offer?”

The fishbone youngster named Akämbka raised his hand again, but Pallëria ignored him. Then, six more raised their own hands, he lowered his, understanding that he would not be given permission to talk again.

“My name is Valëria Blässio and I’m from the Rädrit colony. I could evolve into-”

“Sea-druid,” he interrupted her, “your colony is famous for its research and knowledge of sea plants and herbs.” A beautiful girl was chosen to speak next.

“Märgaret LaMëmos. I hail from the amazing colony of Haäjo.” She said and flicked her long, rich blonde hair.

“We have a model among us,” he said without letting her finish, giving permission to another youngster, the largest of them all in terms of size.

“Rädgar Ëcho, Dekahöhra colony,” he said and immediately stopped, expecting that he would also be interrupted. “Reaper,” he added when he realised that Pallëria was waiting for him to finish.

“Very well,” he said. Then, he gestured for the rest of the youngsters to lower their hands. “What about you, my son?” He asked the young man from the Trumöhra colony with the brown curly hair, light-brown eyes, and smooth brown skin.

“Me?” He wondered, as he hadn’t raised his hand. In fact, he hadn’t even paid attention to any of that.

“Yes, you,” he answered sharply.

“I can only swim fast and fight, nothing else... and I’m not your son!” He pouted.

Everyone in the hall held their collective breath, staring at the Ocean Lord and the ungodly young man. They couldn't believe that someone his age could be so arrogant in front of a legendary person like their Ocean Lord. They were all waiting to see how he would handle it.

However, Pallëria knew all along exactly how this young man would answer him. He knew it before he even asked, but he did it to offer one more important lesson, the last one for that day.

“As rude, selfish, or proud as you are, as hated or loved, even if you are smart, lazy, or beautiful, remember that you are all equal in this particular moment of your life! You have every right to be yourselves, nobody will try to change you, but always remember that Atlantis is above all! *One with the water!*”

“*One with the water!*” All one hundred and thirty-two chosen ones repeated, each in their own way and expressed with the feelings they had at the time.



## Shärogelkädre

After Pallëria's withdrawal, a hundred and thirty-two courtiers entered the hall wearing sky-blue costumes reminiscent of a chlamys. Each courtier corresponded to a youngster; they swam gracefully to their spot, grabbed their hands, and led them outside of the hall.

Every courtier was of the same gender as their appointed child, but this was unlikely to be their only feature shared in common. Most of the children followed with joy while others a bit nervously. Krukövia tried to pull his hands away from his courtier's grip, but he failed, the man's grip was as tight as a pair of pliers.

Krukövia turned his head to face the courtier for the first time, as he had been desperately looking anywhere else but at him. Next to him was a tall and thin but well-built man, with childish characteristics and an array of scattered scars that gave him a wild masculinity. He also had dark blue hair which waved smoothly through the water. His eyes and tail were of the same colour.

"I was feeling exactly the same at your age, on this very day!" Were his first words.

Krukövia didn't reply, but he did feel a bit better. For some reason, his words made Krukövia trust this man, even if he had no idea who he was. Still, he had managed to earn his trust in only a few words.

"I am now grateful to him!" He finished his thoughts and began to swim, pulling Krukövia hard.

Even if Krukövia had wanted to resist, he was unable to; this man was far stronger than him. In that particular moment he saw this man as his future self, who he wanted to be, for some inexplicable reason.

"You said he chose you?" Krukövia ascertained, repeating the man's earlier words inside his head.

"Yes," he immediately answered, slowing down.

"Not your colony's citizens?"

"I'm the last survivor of my colony!" He replied with apathy and hit his tail to increase his speed.

Krukövia realised that their short conversation was over, for now. For the first time in his life he wanted to translate dozens of thoughts, but unfortunately he had to wait.



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The two Atlantians followed the others to a big building in the suburbs of Orhända. It was named Poseidônio, Krukövia read the name when he arrived astride the royal dolphin. This building was meant to be their homes until they reached adulthood. When they arrived at the entrance, his escorts released him and nodded for him to enter alone. Krukövia hesitated. For reasons beyond his understanding, he didn't want to leave his courtier's side.

"They're waiting for you," he said, this time in a soft and kind voice.

"I don't want to-"

"Only death can tear us apart!" He interrupted, guessing his next words.

Krukövia felt better right away. It was like he was looking at his big brother, the one he never had! As if this man could offer him the protection his real father had never offered. He then turned his head and entered the building.

When he exited the water, his tail split in two and gave way to legs covered in scales and seaweed. He walked quickly and reached the rest of the youngsters, all packed into a corridor with a tall, middle-aged and quite muscular woman in front of them.

"Welcome," she started in a beautiful and tinkling voice, "from this day on, Orhända is your new colony, the place where you'll grow and learn the ways of serving your Atlantis! You are to stay here until the end of your training. Afterwards, you may either stay or return to your colonies and lead the way to prosperity. Questions are unnecessary at the moment," she continued, interrupting a young man from raising his hand. "Everything you need to know will be taught during your training. Now, follow me so I can allocate you to your dormitories. You need to rest, your training starts tomorrow." With this, she led the way.

When they passed through the corridor, they arrived in a new hall which was nearly completely empty. Only one bookstand, on which a yellowed envelope was waiting, stood there. The woman took the envelope, opened it, and removed a seaweed-scroll from the inside filled with names written in white ink.

Without hesitation, she made her way to the next corridor. This building was also perfectly clean on every surface, including walls, floor, and ceiling. Krukövia realised that the whole of Orhända likely looked like this.

On every ceiling various messages were written in their language: "The water that forever cools us, forever protects us," "Tribe = Family," "Never betray those you love, because the love of the universe will reciprocate it," "The past must be a guide for the future," "Do not demand respect, earn it."

Those were but a few of the messages that Krukövia managed to read before they arrived in another new corridor, this one full of doors. At every door, the woman consulted the seaweed-scroll and called out three names, always of the same gender.

Slowly the group grew smaller, passing from door to door and from one floor to another. When they arrived on the fifth floor, twenty-seven children were left.

At the first door on this floor, the woman called the names of Valëria Blässio, Yiallënia Madagörsh, and Märgaret LaMëmos. And on it went.

They finally arrived at the last door of this floor, with only three youngsters remaining. They were Akämbka Lëji, Rädgar Êcho, and, of course, Krukövia Lëktor.

“Go ahead,” the woman said and showed them the door.

Akämbka looked incredibly happy with their group. He opened the door and entered, Rädgar following. Krukövia was also ready to enter, but the woman stopped him.

“Can I have a word, Lëktor?”

He turned to face her, surprised. For the first time he observed the details of her face and noted that she reminded him of a manta ray.

“The Lord of the Ocean asked me to give you this,” she said and removed a pendant from one of her pockets.

That pendant had neither a chain nor a rope, held together only by some thick, yellow seaweed braided together with small sky-blue seashells hanging all over it. The pendant itself was a round piece of coral with a symbol in the middle that looked like a wave.

“What is that?” He asked without thought, eagerly taking it into his possession.

“You will learn when the time comes. Until then, always keep it with you,” she answered and turned her back to him, leaving the building.

He stood there watching her back until she disappeared from sight. He then wrapped the pendant around his right wrist and entered his dormitory, the room that would be his home for the next few years.

The room was quite comfortable for the three of them, with three beds, three personal wardrobes, and one bedside table each. However, there was also something quite extraordinary about this room, the walls! They were made from very thick, dull-but-transparent glass through which one could see almost all of Orhända. It was a breathtaking view.

The two other kids chose their beds and lay down while Krukövia simply went to the window and started looking outside. Everything was so beautiful and aristocratic, quite the opposite of the colony in which he had been born and raised.

Trumöhra was built deep inside a coral area, hidden from those who didn't know its exact location and protected with countless sharp protrusions, hence its name. The coexistence with the fish, mainly mollusks, was harmonious. The fish were helpful in hardening and physical training, while the Iglahümi protected them from bigger fish. And, of course, they fed them too.

That colony had nothing more to offer than soldiers, servants, and some sort of weaponry and armour, all made from coral. They didn't want to engage in bottomland farming, nor to improve their lives through any other means. They were happy just exchanging coral items for goods and enjoying the quiet solitude of their geographical spot.

Orhända, on the other hand, was a colony rich in light. It was constantly lit, either by the suns appearing for some hours of the day or through artificial lighting, which, to him, was of unknown origin as he knew nothing of mechanics. All the buildings were big and architecturally impressive, being covered by coloured gemstones and sea flowers planted for gardens.

There were also plenty of rocky roads, totally useless, as they swam, and dozens of statues of older leaders and important personalities from their tribe and galaxy. They were dazzlingly sculpted, all made from an unknown black and shiny material that could reflect light.

"How do you both feel?" Akämbka interrupted Krukövia's thoughts. Rädgar didn't reply, just shrugged his shoulders casually.

"You?" Krukövia asked without turning to look at him.

"WON-DER-FUL!"

"Really?" He asked again, mistrustful.

"I'll finally have the chance to prove myself, help my colony, and then... earn my freedom forever!" He declared passionately.

"What do you mean freedom?" Krukövia asked once again, feeling that he'd already had enough of his bullshit.

"But leave Atlantis, of course!"

"What?" Rädgar exclaimed, surprised.

"Excuse me?" Krukövia said, annoyed, and turning to face him.

"By the time we grow up," he started again with conviction, "I will know everything about Atlantis. But that knowledge is just the beginning of all knowledge of the galaxy!"

Rädgar was staring at Akämbka in surprise. Krukövia, on the other hand, looked at him like he was crazy. His words, depending on his age, created an image of a conceited boy out of contact with reality. Nobody dreamt of leaving Atlantis, especially at that age.

Krukövia turned his back on him again, hoping he wouldn't suffer hearing more. He couldn't bear to have a chattering shadow next to him all the time, having to listen to useless bullshit all day.

“What’s that in your hand?” He asked, pointing at the pendant Krukövia received before he entered.

“Heirloom,” Krukövia replied sharply.

“You didn’t have it before!” He continued annoyingly.

“Of course I didn’t,” he said aggressively, “I didn’t want to be distracted, but apparently I had to keep it hidden!”

“Oh, don’t worry,” he said right away, like nothing had happened, “this will stay between us, right Rädgar?”

Krukövia felt so much anger that he instantly imagined himself punching Akämbka in the face. Thankfully, those were his last words. He took off his clothes, yawned, and closed his eyes, something that Rädgar quickly imitated.

A minute later, Krukövia whispered to himself: “Silence, at last!” He sat on his bed unable to sleep, still looking out the windows and observing everything.

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Many hours later Krukövia found himself still looking out the window, unable to sleep. Akämbka was snoring and Rädgar was murmuring, tossing and turning in his sleep. The artificial lights had been dimmed, separating the rush hours from the quiet hours. His vision was limited, but the silence of the darkness very familiar and friendly, helping him to ease into his new life.

Then, all of a sudden, he saw a moving light passing his window at great speed. Seconds later, three more lights followed. They appeared from the depths of the city, moving straight in his direction.

His immediate thought was that something was going on, but he couldn’t do anything about it. However, the curiosity that was fuelled inside his mind was so great that he started having some extreme thoughts. It took him a couple of seconds to decide what to do. He didn’t care much about the consequences. The worst-case scenario was that they would send him back home, something that wasn’t really such a disturbing thought.

He stood up quietly, opened the door, and started through into the corridors as quickly and stealthily as he could. When he arrived at the entrance of Poseidönio, he saw the lights at a far distance... but close enough to follow them.

Their speed was remarkable, but he was also fast. He had learned from a young age that it was important to swim fast and be flexible; otherwise one would be covered in scratches and scars from the sharp corals of his colony.

He jumped into the water, his legs transformed into a tail, and he followed the lights. They were faster than him but easy to spot, allowing him to stay on course.

The chase continued for almost half an hour, until every light of Orhända was gone from the horizon. Krukövia now found himself in the middle of nowhere, surrounded only by water.

Five minutes later, he started seeing something new, he couldn't understand what it was, and a minute after, the lights disappeared magically. There were two possibilities for this. Either they had spotted him or they had arrived at their destination.

No matter what, he was willing to continue. He swam faster, straight to the point where the lights had vanished. The closer he got, the more he understood exactly what that something was. It was a thumping rock full of holes, taking on the appearance of a rocky nest.

He now knew the reason the lights had disappeared, but he couldn't be sure where they went or which hole they had entered. However, his curiosity was even greater. There was no option of quitting, not after all this effort. With a little guesswork, he chose the hole which he hoped was the right one.

The walls of the cave he entered were smooth and slippery, so he tried his best to avoid touching them and losing his balance. The deeper he got, the wilder the water turned. In very little time he had reached the point of no return; the water swept him away and there was nothing he could do.

The water flowed through the holes into the top of a huge cave, down into a deep lake. The lake was surrounded by land, on which stood four people and a nine-foot-tall red crab.

Krukövia's body fell into the water so hard that it knocked the breath out of him. It took a few seconds for his gills to work properly again. When his brain was oxygenated once more, he swam to the surface and just barely stuck out his head.

Three males and one female stood in front of him. Three of them were wearing the traditional armour of their tribe and the Ocean Lord's guards, each holding tridents, while the fourth was wearing very strange, grey armour full of grooves and holding a metallic box.

From Krukövia's position, he could only see the face of the man in front of the red crab. His facial characteristics betrayed a bloodthirsty nature.

"So?" Krukövia heard the man in front of the crab say.

"Since you don't want to be held accountable for the crime you just committed," a well-known voice replied, "you will suffer capital punishment!"

"And you think that you three can defeat me? Capture me and lead me to your Ocean Lord?" He asked mockingly.

"Do you even know who I am?" The man with the familiar voice talked again.

“No idea,” he said proudly, “but if I’m not mistaken, based on your trident, you must be the famous Astro-fighter!”

The man in the middle was holding the most distinct trident Krukövia had even seen. Instead of three pointed spears, it had three sharp stars lined up in a row, making it even more dangerous. Even its colour was different, a glowing yellow that made it look like a real star.

“Exactly,” the man replied calmly.

“That makes your death far more interesting for me and my master! Accept the Visionarian’s Pearl, I will also offer him your Astro-trident!”

The Astro-fighter nodded to the other two to step back, a move that surprised his opponent. Once he was sure that his foe not joking, he started laughing with a tinge of paranoia, saying: “Seriously? You’ll battle me all alone?”

“Yes,” the Astro-fighter said decidedly.

“Then *you* probably have no idea who I am!” He continued in the same paranoid way, feeling incredibly proud of himself.

“It doesn’t matter,” the Astro-fighter said casually.

The man put the box down and placed it between the crab’s legs. Then, he put his hands inside the only pockets in his armour and removed two metallic batons, one in each hand.

“Do you know what these are?” The man asked, showing off the pair of metallic batons.

“Again, it doesn’t matter,” the Astro-fighter replied calmly.

“No, it doesn’t, because you’re a dead man!” Once he spat out his words, he flicked his batons and they transformed. When their transformation was complete, they took on the form of two metallic pincers.

The man attacked with his left hand first and immediately following up with his right, trying to cut the Astro-fighter’s body into pieces. But he managed to avoid both, easily and very impressively.

Young Krukövia finally saw his face and was left speechless. The Astro-fighter was the man he had met in the gathering hall with the dark blue hair, the man who felt like his older brother!

The attacks continued unabated, but no matter how hard he tried and no matter how fast he attacked, the Astro-fighter avoided it easily.

“Attack!” The man spat with hatred.

“Are you ready to die?” Astro-fighter replied casually, once again, to the great annoyance of his enemy.

“You bastard!” He said, gritting his teeth.

When he completed his next attack, he jumped back and stood in front of his crab trying to think of his next move. Failure was not an option; he had to win and escape. “Together, Crabgoil!” he said again and prepared himself to attack alongside the animal.



Then, Krukövia saw Astro-fighter take a step forward, bend his knees and jump over the crab by using his trident like a pole vaulter. The crab tried to grab him out of the air, but he had jumped higher than the crustacean could reach.

His landing held another surprise for young Krukövia, but even more so for his opponents. Astro-fighter brought his free hand to his chest, sticking an ancient stone into a slot in his armour. It came to life immediately and started spreading all over his body like a virus. A second before the man's metallic pincers hit him, the spread had been completed and his entire body was covered.

One pincer tightened around his head and the other his waist. Under normal circumstances this would have killed him, but then another unspeakable thing happened. An ocean blue hyper beam appeared from his body, destroying the pincers!

Both his enemy and the crab took some steps back, covering their eyes. The beam was so bright that it blinded them for a moment.

Krukövia was not affected by the brightness, allowing him to see the Astro-fighter's form. He was totally black and deformed, with no facial features. Before he could even think of something to liken it to, an ocean blue liquid appeared from his chest and diffused throughout the rest of his body.

The amorphous body was instantly filled with ocean blue irregular grooves which removed the now unnecessary stone, giving a human form to the body which they were embracing once again. The grooves disappeared right after their job was done.

The attack that followed was so fast, flexible, and technically perfect that, with a vertical strike of his Astro-trident, he cut the crab in half. His opponent only managed to widen his eyes out of surprise and fear. The next moment, a new attack was underway.

The Astro-fighter made a perfect turn on his axis and struck again, this time vertically. His opponent didn't even have time to react; he just felt the cold metal pierce his grey armour and sink deeply into his flesh. It finally stopped at the back of his spine.

Krukövia couldn't hold back the exclamation of fear that reached his larynx. It not only betrayed his presence, but also his position. The faceless head instantly turned in his direction, facing him as he froze in terror.