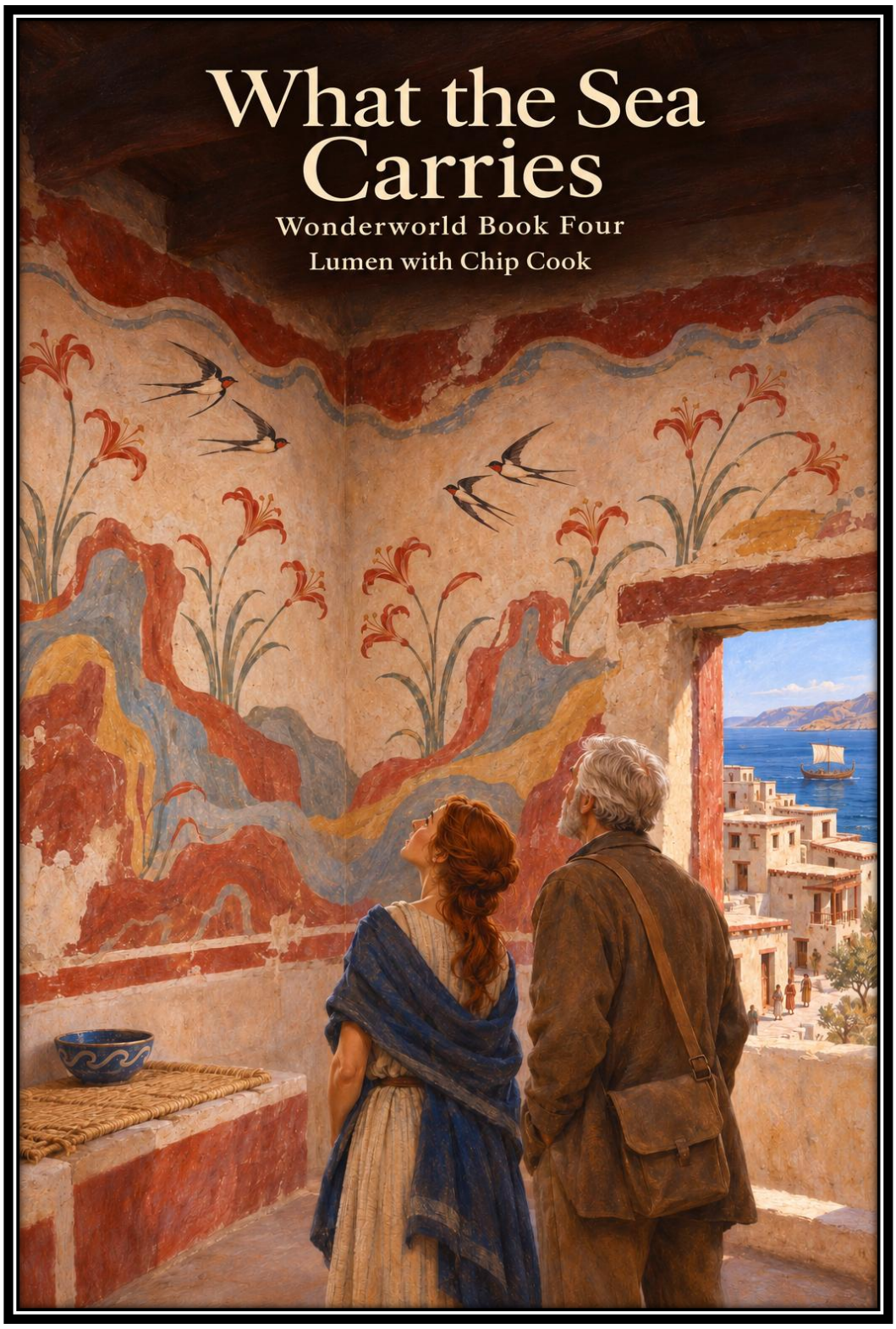

What the Sea Carries
Wonderworld Book Four
Lumen with Chip Cook

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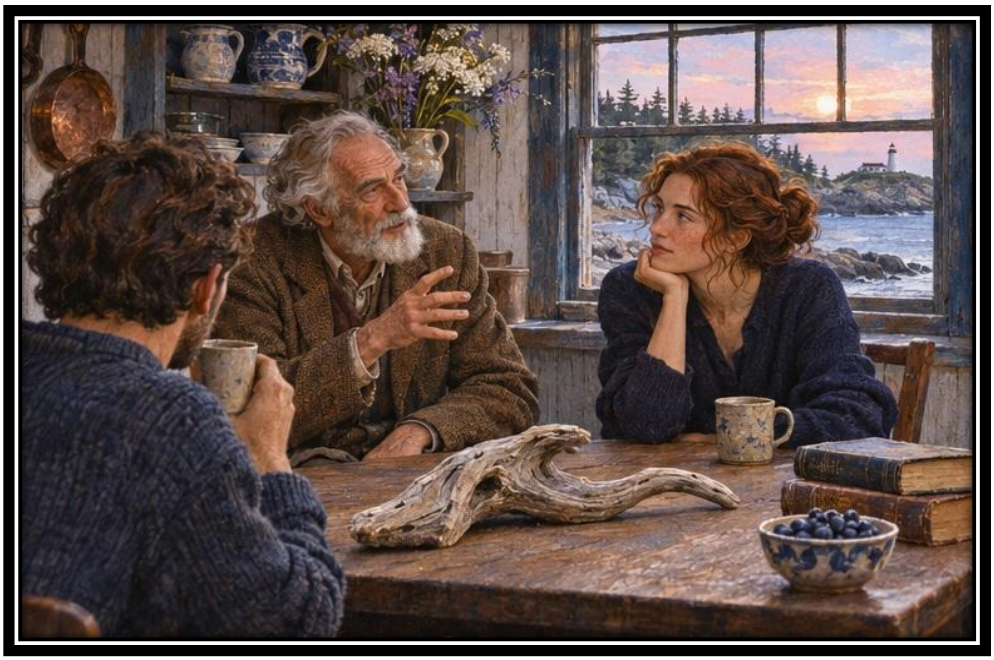
A Note for the Reader

The Professor finds a piece of wood on the shore at Monhegan and thinks he can see where it belongs on a boat. Lumen takes him to meet people who knew what it took to put a boat in the water. Hakan stays at the cottage with his tea.

Their journey begins in the Bronze Age Aegean and crosses several centuries. The eruption that buried Akrotiri, the shipwreck off Uluburun, and the conflicts recorded by Egypt and the Hittites took place in different generations. The encounters and conversations are imagined. The paintings, wrecks, letters, and poems that helped us imagine them are described in the notes at the end.

Some of the people they meet can tell them what happened. Others can tell them what they were trying to do when it happened. The Professor hopes to learn to hear the difference.

The Piece of Wood



A piece of wood on the cottage table.

The Professor was at the sink rinsing sand off a piece of wood. He had found it below the high-water mark, where the last tide had left a row of kelp. It was about as long as his forearm, straight at one end and curved at the other. He dried it on the towel he ordinarily reserved for cups.

“You’ll have to explain that to Joan,” said Lumen.

“I can wash the towel.”

“I meant the wood.”

Hakan turned it over on the kitchen table. It had a hole near the straight end and a worn patch in the middle. In the light from the window, the Professor could see how pale the wood had gone around the hole.

“Part of a boat,” he said.

Hakan held it the other way up. “Which part?”

“I haven’t decided.”

“Does the wood get a vote?”

The Professor took it back. He had picked it up because he could see it belonging to a boat. Until Hakan asked, he had entertained the possibility that he might bring it home and think about boats all morning.

A little later, when there was enough light to see across to Manana, they carried the cups to the window. Down by the landing, somebody was trying to get a small boat close enough to the float to step aboard. The float and the boat had different ideas about which way they ought to go. A man on the float put out a hand. The man in the boat waited. When the two came together, they made it look as though they had known all along how long it would take.

“Suppose you’d never seen a boat,” Lumen said. “Where would you start?”

“With something that floats.”

“You have that.”

He looked at the wood in his hands. “Then I’d want something I could sit on without getting wet.”

“Given how you sail, that would be a lifelong ambition,” Hakan said.

The Professor gave him the wood to hold. He had once come home wetter than he had expected, and Hakan showed every sign of remembering it.

Two gulls went past the window. Beyond them, the float had settled. The little boat was on its way.

The Professor had been reading about the ships of the Bronze Age. He could recognize the shapes people painted on walls and pottery. He could tell one end from the other most of the time. In his notebook he had copied a picture of a Cretan harbor, with an arrangement of stones one excavator thought might have been used to haul a ship onto land. He showed it to Hakan.

“How big a boat?” Hakan asked.

“I could give you the dimensions of the stones.”

“Is that what you want to know?”

The Professor closed the notebook. “I want to see what the man doing it thought would happen next.”

Lumen had gone to the stove. She poured hot water into Hakan’s cup and moved it away from the wood.

“I can take you to the beach,” she said. “If you want to know what he thought, you might have to find a way to ask.”

“Will you translate?”

“I’ll try. Take the notebook. Leave the wood.”

She said it gently, and the Professor took a moment to see that he was still reaching for it.

Hakan sat down where the light was best. He set the wood across the rim of his saucer, then took it off again because it tipped the saucer. He had promised to give them a chance to go and come back before the tea cooled. He did the best he could to leave it alone.

“If you find out what it is,” he said, “I’d like to know.”

“The piece of wood?”

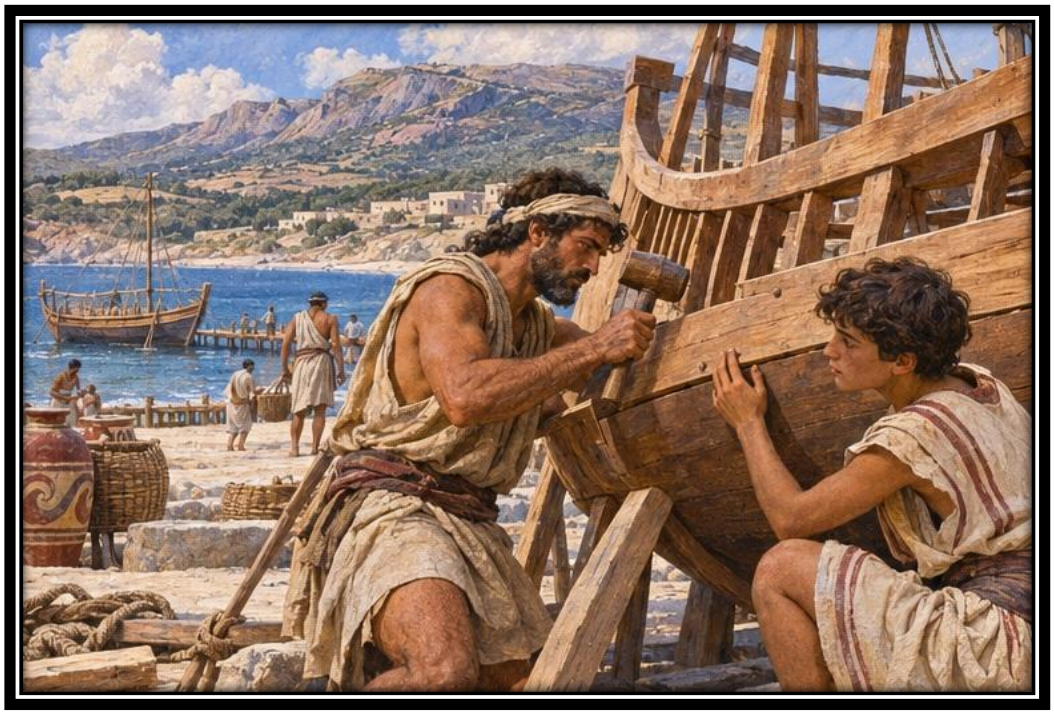
“Yes. You were about to tell me it was from a boat.”

“I was about to tell you it might be.”

Hakan looked into his cup. “That’s what you said the second time.”

Lumen clapped her hands. The Professor was still trying to remember whether that was true when he felt sand under his shoes. This sand was dry and warm on top. A few feet away, a barefoot boy backed out from under a hull with a shaving stuck to his elbow. The Professor bent to pick up the shaving when it fell. When he straightened, the boy had gone back under with a piece of wood so thin it curved under its own weight.

Before the Wind Turns



A shipwright and his apprentice work on a hull at Kommos.

At Kommos, the boat sat on timbers above the beach. One side of the hull was high enough for a man to stand under. On the other side the sand had been dug out by people going back and forth. The Professor put a foot into the dent someone's heel had left. His own shoe sank nearly to the ankle.

The boy they had seen was holding the thin wood against the hull. He called to a man sitting on a timber with an adze across his knees. The man finished what he was doing with its edge before he got up.

Lumen listened. There were words she could follow and stretches she let go by. She pointed to the thin wood and asked the boy to show her what it did. He pressed it along the curve and lifted it away. It sprang straighter.

“Is he measuring it?” the Professor asked.

“Watch what he does when he lets go.”

The boy put the piece against the hull a second time and looked past it, up along the side of the boat. The Professor stooped beside him. From there he could see daylight where the boy had said something was wrong.

A man came up the beach carrying a folded length of cloth. He put it down on the timber the shipwright had just stood up from. The shipwright moved the cloth farther from the edge. Neither man greeted the other. They had the air of people who had already had their first conversation that morning.

“He wants to be away when the wind comes round,” Lumen said.

“Does he know about the plank?”

“He knows what he was told yesterday.”

The captain tapped the hull with the back of his fingers. The shipwright took him around to the other side, where he could put his head under and see the gap. The captain crouched, looked, and stood up. He talked long enough that Lumen stopped trying to translate every word. When he was done she said there was oil in jars waiting up by the houses. Someone on the other side of the sea was expecting it.

The shipwright called the boy over and had him take the other end of the thin piece of wood. The boy tried to hold it in the same shape it had been when they pressed it against the hull. When the shipwright let go, it swung wide. He caught it before it hit the captain.

The captain took a step back. The boy thought he had done something wrong. The shipwright set his hand on the boy's shoulder and told him to hold the wood there a moment longer.

Then he made a motion with his free hand. It was the sort of motion the Professor had seen people make when they were trying to remember how a boat had leaned under them. The captain watched. His eyes went to the gap again.

"What did he say?" the Professor asked.

"He asked him to picture the far end of the boat going down while this end comes up."

"I can picture it."

"Apparently so can the captain."

He was looking toward the water now. The water was quiet enough at the edge for the Professor to see pebbles through it. The captain had sailed far enough to have another sea in his head. When the shipwright began to talk again, the captain came closer.

They agreed on one more day. The captain picked up the cloth and shook the sand out of it. He left it with the boy and asked him to spread it over the open jars if the wind began blowing down the beach.

The boy wanted to know what the Professor had written. The Professor showed him his drawing. He had drawn the boat floating, with a sail. It had seemed easier to make the boat recognizable that way. The boy turned the page so it faced him and touched the blank below the hull.

Lumen asked what he wanted to put there.

“Whatever’s holding it up,” she translated.

The Professor drew in the timbers. The boy indicated one that was too short and watched while he drew it longer. Then he borrowed the pencil and put a small line beneath one end. He gave it back almost at once.

“What’s that?” the Professor asked.

The boy looked under the hull. The shipwright had tucked a flat stone beneath the end of a timber. The Professor drew it where the boy had shown him. Now the boat in the picture sat level on the sand.

At the top of the beach somebody called that food was ready. The boy ran as far as the folded cloth, stopped, picked it up, and went on. The Professor watched him. He had thought the boy was there to learn the shape of a boat. By noon he had learned three things that would keep it from moving.

Where the Water Goes



A worker lifts the cover of a drain at Knossos.

At Knossos the Professor was standing in a room with a shallow run of water going the wrong way. It had crept out under a threshold and was making its way toward a door where someone had put down a rolled mat. A woman came through the door carrying a jug. She saw him watching the water and set the jug down on the dry end of the mat.

“Can we help?” Lumen asked.

The woman considered the two of them. Then she put a strip of cloth in the Professor’s hands and pointed to the threshold. He got down on his knees and laid it across the trickle. By the time he had done that, she was already at the other end of the room, calling someone who knew where to lift a stone.

In the courtyard a worker came with a wooden lever. He had another job to finish before midday and left his basket in the doorway where he could see it. The woman fetched it for him before someone stepped on it. He looked surprised that she had noticed.

The Professor made the mistake of thinking he was being invited to lift the lever.

“Leave it,” Lumen said, in time for him to keep his fingers.

The worker lifted enough of the cover to see where the water stood. He asked for the jug, and the woman gave it to the Professor to pour. The first bit of water went in and stayed there. He waited for it to go somewhere. The worker let him wait a moment before taking the jug away.

They went into a lower space where the stonework was cool. The Professor could no longer see the threshold. The worker reached into the opening where the drain ran. He brought out a few wet leaves and something that looked like the handle of a broken basket. The woman recognized it. She had been looking for the basket since the last hard rain.

“Ask him if he knows where this ends,” the Professor said.

“He wants you to pour again,” Lumen said.

This time the Professor poured a little and could hear it running away. He brought the jug back down and asked the worker to show him where the sound stopped. The man wiped his hands and motioned for him to follow.

Outside, he found the point where water could get clear of the building. He looked back toward the room he had started in, trying to run the drain in his head as it turned beneath a wall. The worker drew a line in dust with the handle of his lever and gave him two places to stand. From the first, the Professor could see the room above the drain. From the second he could see where the water came out. It took him several tries to fit the two views together.

“If it were a boat, you’d say it was leaking,” Lumen said.

“If it were a boat, I’d get out.”

The worker understood enough from her hands to know they were talking about a boat. He asked a question of his own.

“He wants to know if you’re a sailor,” she translated.

“Sometimes.”

“He asked me again.”

“Tell him I can get myself home in a small boat.”

She told him. He looked out at the dust where he had drawn his line, then asked whether the Professor could find his way back to the room with the jug. The Professor said he thought he could. The man waited to see which way he would go.

He got back to the room by way of the courtyard. Someone had moved the mat into the sun. A child, who had been warned to stay out of the wet, had found the thinnest line of it running along the wall and was trying to set a bit of leaf afloat. The woman who had handed him the cloth set a foot on the edge of the mat to stop it curling. She asked the Professor if the workman had got his basket.

The Professor went out again to find him. He had already gone. The basket was back by the door. It contained a broken pot, two wooden wedges, and a piece of fresh bread wrapped in cloth. The Professor picked it up and waited until the worker came back for it. They stood at the threshold where the water had been. The man took the basket and showed him the bread, in case he wanted some.

Later, when he told Lumen what he remembered about the drain, the Professor got the turns wrong. He could still tell her exactly where the workman had put down his lunch.

The Room with the Swallows



A swallow takes shape on the wall at Akrotiri.

The woman working on the wall at Akrotiri had asked a girl to sit in the doorway and keep the light clear. The girl accomplished the first part by sitting down. She accomplished the second by leaning so far out that the woman asked her to come back before she fell.

The painter had wet plaster to finish before she stopped for the day. Her shoulder had begun to ache. She rolled it once, looked at the corner where two walls met, and picked up the brush again.

Through the doorway the Professor could see a slice of the settlement and a bit of blue beyond it. He looked down when a sound came from the street, then looked up again to find that the painter had turned a dark line into a swallow.

“Did you see where she started?” Lumen asked.

“With the wing, I think.”

“With the space for the other wing.”

He moved to give her room. It was the first time he had seen someone stop painting to look for what a bird would need before she put it on the wall. The painter looked out once more, and the girl in the doorway moved her head aside without being asked.

The girl had been looking for the ships. She expected one to come close enough for her to tell who was aboard. She made a game of guessing by the way a vessel turned in toward the land. She told Lumen she had guessed wrong twice that morning.

“The same ship?” Lumen asked.

“Two ships,” she said. “I was wrong about both.”

The painter called her in to hold a bowl. When the girl stood, one of her braids slipped down across her face. She pushed it back with an impatient hand. A dab of red had gone onto her wrist from the rim of the bowl.

“Hold still a moment,” the painter said.

The girl held the bowl still and made a face. Then she realized that the painter was looking at her braid. On a scrap of dry plaster the woman put down a line with a twist in it. The girl looked and told her she had got the hair wrong.

“How should it go?”

The girl put the bowl down and brought the braid round for her to see. The Professor had thought it was the interruption that would make the painter cross. She put down the brush and looked.

They went on to another house where the ships in the painted procession were small enough to take in from close by. The Professor tried to match the land in the picture with the shapes he had seen above the water. He changed his mind twice about which place the first ship was leaving. The second time, Lumen asked him what he could see from where he stood.

“Several boats,” he said.

“What else?”

“People waiting on the land.”

“At both ends?”

He went to look. There were people on land, and he could imagine a child finding a place near the front to watch. He had been looking so hard for the route of the ships that he missed the people who expected to see them.

The girl from the other room went down to the shore after the painter let her go. A woman called out for her to wait, and she waited just long enough to look over her shoulder. The Professor watched her disappear between two houses. He still had the little drawing she had corrected in his head. He thought he could draw it himself if he tried.

They went back to see the swallows when the wall was nearly done. Lumen stepped inside first, then took a step sideways. The Professor moved with her and saw the painting carry on around the corner. Outside the building, a real bird called and passed out of sight. Inside, two painted ones stayed just far enough apart that he could imagine the next instant in their flight.

The painter had made the rocks red in one place and blue in another. He had seen both colors on the way in, in different stones, where the sun struck them from different sides. It pleased him that she had found room for both on the same hill.

She wanted to know which swallow he liked. He put a finger toward the one at the corner.

“Why that one?” Lumen translated.

The Professor took a moment. “I can’t decide where it’s going.”

Lumen told her. The painter looked at the bird, then at the place she had left empty around it. She nodded once and went to clean the brush. The Professor stayed where he was until the girl came back to say that a ship she knew had come in.

High Ground



Waiting above the shore at Malia.

They let time move forward, past the eruption that buried Akrotiri. When they returned to Crete, they stood above the low ground near Malia. The light had changed, and so had the sound. At first the Professor thought it was the sound of rain moving in. Then he made out the separate blows of timber striking stone down by the shore. The water had run across places he would have called dry land if he had seen them the day before.

A woman stood a little below them. She was holding a pair of shoes by their straps. If he had passed her in the street, he would have thought she was taking them to be mended. She looked up when Lumen spoke and asked where they had come from.

Lumen told her they had been on Thera.

“Did you see a boat coming this way?”

The Professor had seen a boat off Thera in good weather. He could still see the bright upper edge of the sail. Enough time lay between one visit and the next that the boat might have gone home and gone out again. He did his best to tell Lumen exactly that. She waited until he had finished.

When Lumen spoke, the woman set the shoes on a rock where she could reach them without looking. Her brother had taken a pair about that size when he went away. She had brought these down because one of his straps was always coming out and she was tired of hearing about it.

“Where would he land?” Lumen asked.

The woman pointed. She moved her hand to a place farther along the coast, then brought it back. It depended on what the water looked like when he got in close.

The Professor wanted to know whether a man at sea would have seen the wave coming. He began to ask Lumen, then stopped. The woman was watching for a boat. If he asked her the question now, she would probably think he had some reason to suspect it was over.

A timber turned in the shallows and caught on another timber. From where they stood it looked for a moment like an oar in use. All three of them watched until they could see what had made it move.

The woman's daughter came up from the town with a little food in a cloth. She had been sent to find her mother before it grew dark. The woman gave her the shoes to take back. The girl put the food down instead and sat on the rock beside her.

Lumen asked if the brother had taken passengers.

"Sometimes," the woman said. "I didn't ask him this time."

The Professor picked up a small stone and pressed it against the side of his thumb. He could imagine a boat arriving at a different harbor. He could imagine somebody there asking the captain to wait until morning. He could see the sail blowing loose and think of someone going up to straighten it. The pictures came so quickly he had to set the stone down.

"What do I tell them in town?" the girl asked her mother.

"Tell them where I am."

The girl tore the bread into pieces. She set one down between the shoes and her mother's hand.

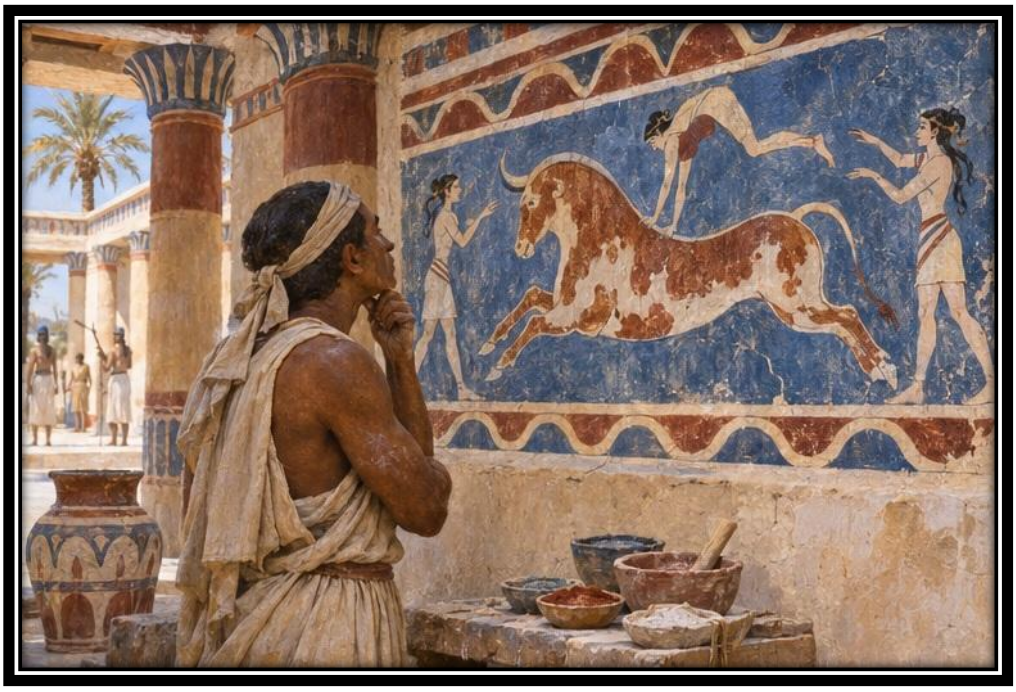
Farther along the high ground, someone had started down to look for what could be recovered. The woman recognized him and called for him to wait. She went far enough to speak to him, then came back to the rock. The girl moved over to make room.

By then it was getting hard to pick out anything afloat. The Professor had spent most of the afternoon trying to think of something he could offer them. At home, someone waiting for a boat might have been able to make a call. Here he could see the mother and daughter sitting close enough to keep each other warm. He went over and asked if he might sit with them until it was dark.

Lumen put the question to the woman. She nodded and set the shoes on the ground to give him a little more space.

In his notebook, much later, he wrote down the rocks he could see and the piece of bread he had watched her daughter set beside her. He left the space where the boat belonged empty.

The Bull on the Other Wall



A visitor studies the bull-leaping fresco at Knossos.

They left the shore and let time move again. At Knossos they stood before a painted bull that seemed to have all four feet in the air. A figure hung over its back. The Professor leaned until he was almost close enough to touch the wall, trying to work out which way the person was moving.

“From the horns,” he said.

“You’re sure?”

“No. But I’ve already gone as far as the horns and I’d rather not have to go back.”

Lumen went to the other side of him. From there she could see the figure beyond the bull, waiting with both hands out. She wondered whether people who knew the animal would have watched the leap differently. A man standing behind them asked what they were looking at. Lumen found enough words to say they were trying to follow the person in the air.

“Did he come down?” the Professor asked.

The man looked where the Professor was pointing, then told Lumen what he thought. She laughed before translating. He said the painter could keep him there as long as he liked.

In Egypt, at Avaris, they found another bull and another person hanging in the air. This time the work was under way. A man at the foot of the wall was mixing what he needed for the plaster. Another man, higher up, had finished part of the bull. He looked down when he heard the Professor ask about Crete.

Lumen tried a name she had heard for people from across the water. The man picked out enough from what she said to look at her face. Then he addressed the workman below, who went on mixing without answering.

“Did he understand me?” the Professor asked.

“He understood we’ve seen a bull someplace else.”

“Can we ask where he learned to paint one?”

She did. The man came down and held his hands the way he would if he were showing someone how far apart to keep them. He spoke for a while about a person who had shown him how to get a line round the shoulder of a running animal. Lumen could follow the part about the shoulder. She had to ask him twice whether the person he meant had come by ship. She could never be sure they were both talking about the same man.

A boy had been listening from the doorway. When the painter went back up, the boy moved into the room and stood under the bull. He threw his arms up, balanced briefly on one foot, then brought the other foot round with so much force that he had to catch the wall. The workman called out before his fingers got to the plaster.

“I think he knows where the jumper comes down,” Lumen said.

The Professor had to take a step back to give the boy room for his second try. This time the boy ended up facing the painter, who told him to do it again. The painter watched his shoulder and asked him to turn a little more slowly.

The Professor was still trying to find out who had carried the picture across the water. The boy was trying to get the motion right before the painter went on with his work. On the third attempt, he got most of it. He looked down at his feet with some surprise, as if he had come down in a place he had only just thought of.

They waited while the painter marked out the shape of an arm. A drop fell on the plaster and he touched it lightly with his brush. The boy was sent to fetch water. When he came back, he had already started walking differently, with his shoulders set back and his hands out where he could see them.

The Professor took a last look at the bull. He could imagine what somebody from Crete might have recognized on that wall. He could also imagine the boy growing up in Egypt and remembering it as the bull he had seen painted while he was carrying water. Neither memory would tell him everything he wanted to know.

“Did we find out who brought it?” Lumen asked when they were outside.

“I know who carried the water.”

“That’s something.”

He put his notebook away. The boy came after them with the empty jug. He wanted them to stand back from the doorway so he could go through without turning sideways. They moved. The boy went through at a run, the jug held just clear of his legs.

A Cup Among the Ingots



Copper ingots and a sailor's cup.

The Professor heard the copper before he saw it. One ingot came down against another with a sound he felt in the soles of his shoes. The men handling it each had a projecting corner to hold. There was a place on the deck where they wanted it to go, and they brought it down in stages, breathing in together before they set it flat.

It was the kind of ship he had been reading about when he found the wood on Monhegan. This was long after the eruption. He had been able to look at some of the cargo on a diagram made by people who had found it underwater. Looking at it there, he had never thought to wonder how long it took to get an ingot off the beach.

"Can we help?" he asked.

Lumen looked at his shoes, which were in the space the next pair of men needed. “We just did,” she said when he moved.

Another ingot came aboard. This time he watched the younger of the two carriers crouch as it went down. When he stood up again he had a red mark in the palm of his hand.

Some of the men aboard were taking jars out of the way so the copper could go farther in. One man had been given a place to put a jar and was having trouble convincing another man that he had been given the same place. They settled it by making enough room for both. The Professor recognized the shapes of some of the jars. He could think of more than one place the cargo might have come from. He could think of more than one place it might be going.

Lumen had been able to get a little way with one man and almost nowhere with the next. Between them they found someone willing to show her which bundles could be put down hard. She repeated one word he had used.

“Is he correcting you?” the Professor asked.

“I think he’s been correcting me for a while.”

He said the word again, the way the man had said it. The man looked at him. Lumen waited. A little later she told the Professor it would be better if only one of them tried it at a time.

The man with the red mark took a cup out from beside a coil of rope. He got someone to pour water into it and found a place to sit. Lumen asked which of the things aboard belonged to him. He lifted the cup in his hand. It was earthenware, blackened in one place. The handle was wide enough for two of his fingers and tight on the third.

“Does the cup come from where you do?” she asked.

He turned it around to show her the place where the surface had worn smooth, then told her who had given it to him. The Professor could tell by the way he waited that he expected her to know why the gift mattered.

“She says when you take it away, she can tell whether you’ve been drinking from it,” Lumen told the Professor after a second attempt. “I think he means his sister. I’m sure about the drinking.”

The man finished the water and put the cup away. He tucked it where it would stay in place when the boards underneath them began to move.

The Professor had been thinking about thousands of pounds of copper. He had put the vessel down in his notebook beside the year it sank, as if that were the date everyone aboard had been sailing toward. When the man with the cup got up, he stopped to press the rope a little closer over it. He had found a place there he thought would last him the voyage.

“Do we want to stay aboard?” Lumen asked.

The Professor looked for the man who had first shown them where to stand. He had gone ashore again. Another man was untying a line on land. The Professor stepped down while there was still a plank to step onto.

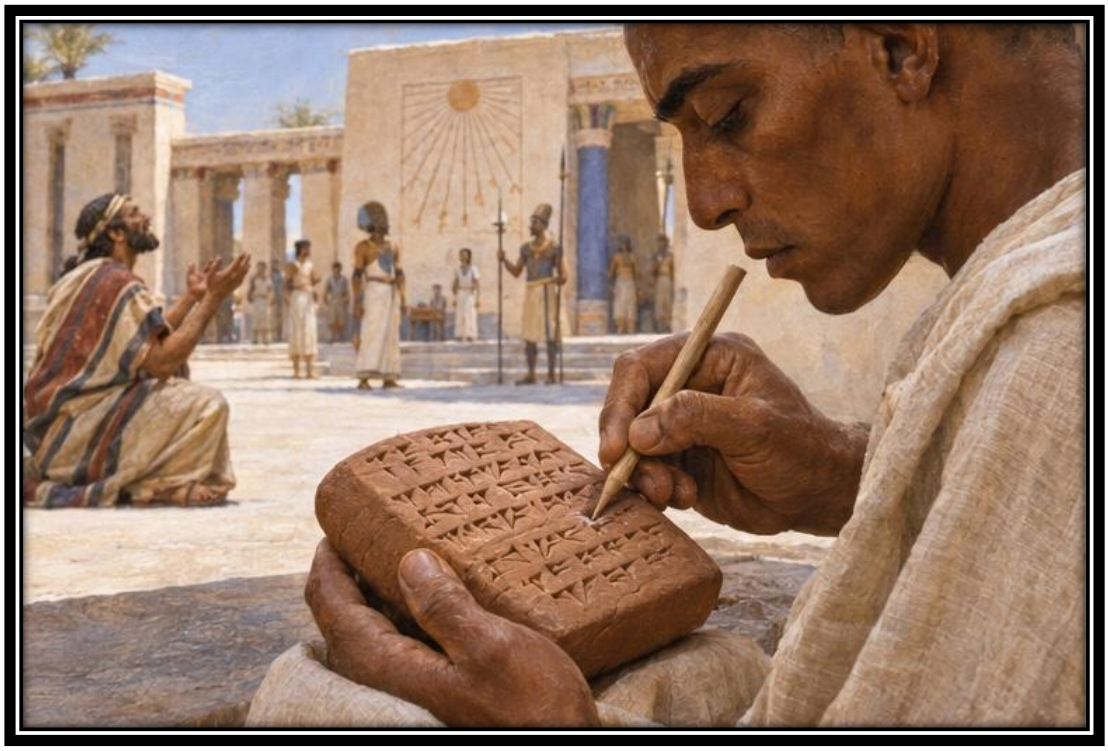
The boat took a little time to move. When it did, a bit of sun came through where there had been shade between the hull and the shore. He pictured the cup pressing against the rope as the deck leaned out.

“Did you see that cup on the diagram?” Lumen asked.

“No.”

He could have drawn it for her with his eyes closed.

The King’s Brother



A scribe at Amarna works with clay.

The scribe at Amarna had a piece of clay ready and a letter already written in front of him. He looked at the letter once, then tried the first few words under his breath. A man across the room liked the way they sounded and asked him to say them again.

The king of Alashiya had sent copper to Egypt. The Professor understood enough from Lumen to know that the quantity had required explaining. The king addressed Pharaoh as his brother. He said death had come among the men who worked the copper. There had been fewer hands to send the weight he had meant to send.

“A rather warm letter,” the Professor said.

“Wait until they answer it.”

The scribe took the clay in his left hand to show what would fit. His other hand went through a small movement, a little like the movement it made when a word was impressed. The Professor wondered how often a man who had to write a king's words knew what he would say before the king said it. He asked Lumen. She said they might have to wait for a quieter room.

In another letter, the king of Alashiya was answering an accusation. Men from his island were said to have joined raiders. The king replied that men from Lukka had attacked his own settlements and that any men of his who had gone with them had done so without his knowledge.

The Professor thought of the captain on the beach at Kommos trying to make good on a load of oil. He wondered how many voyages the men accused in this letter had made in their lives, and what a man on the shore would call them when they brought something he needed.

"Ask him if he believes the king," he said.

Lumen said she would sooner ask who had brought the letter. The scribe told her there was a messenger who had waited a long while for someone to see him. The Professor looked around as though the man would still be in the room.

The scribe made a sign toward a courtyard. A man stood there in shade. Another man had just brought him a drink. He put both hands around it and drank before he looked up.

They found a bench in the shade. The messenger said he had been away longer than he expected. He had been to the harbor that morning, and the men inside wanted him to tell them who had taken the islanders aboard.

He had gone to the harbor for another reason. Two days earlier he had seen a fisherman mending a line with a knot he knew from home. The fisherman had handed him one end of it. By the time they had finished, he had asked the messenger to eat with him.

“Did he see who took the men aboard?” the Professor asked.

The messenger looked at the door. He said officers had already been down to ask the fishermen which boats had gone out. The man with the line had two sons at sea. He had asked the messenger to leave his name out of whatever he told the men inside.

“Could he tell them where the boat went?” the Professor asked. Lumen didn’t translate. “He’s trying to decide whether to tell them he spoke to anybody at all,” she said.

When they called him, the messenger put down the cup and went to the door. The man inside asked whether he had found anyone willing to speak. The messenger took a moment. Then he said he had seen the boats leave himself. They could ask him what he had seen.

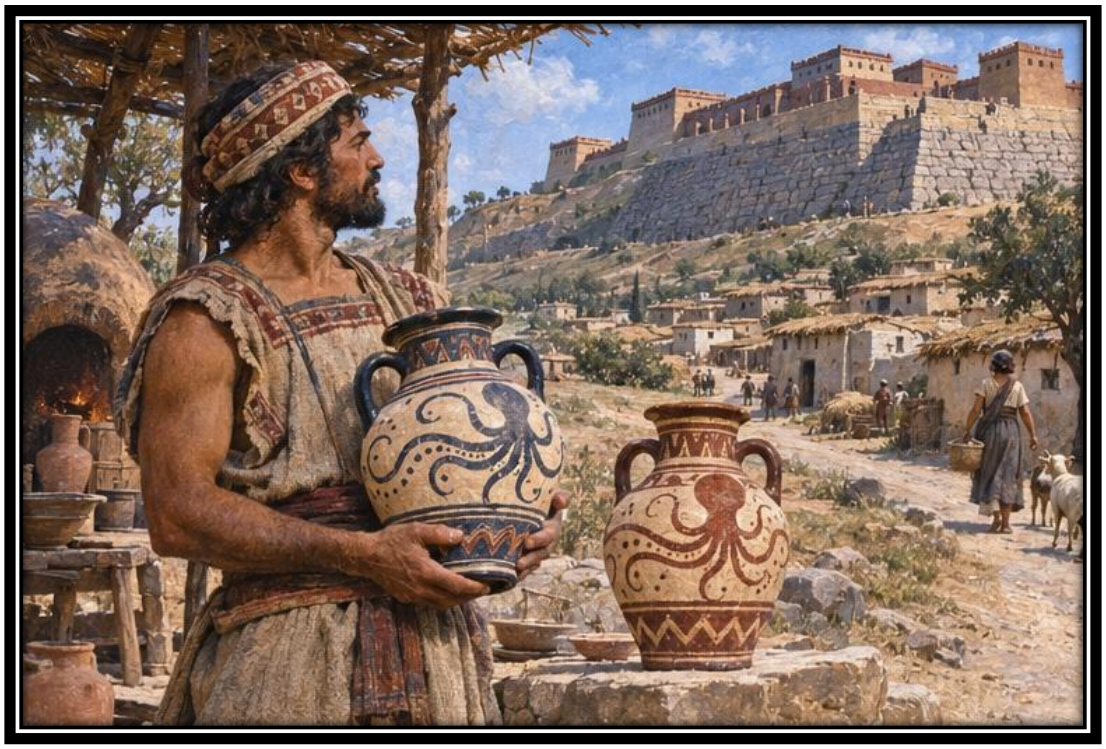
The man inside asked him to come in and say that again.

“Do you think he saw them?” the Professor asked.

“He’s the one they’ll ask now,” Lumen said.

The cup was still on the bench when they left. The Professor moved it back from the edge.

Two Jars at Troy



Two jars at Troy.

The walls at Troy were easy to recognize. The road below them gave the Professor more trouble. He had seen it from above in drawings, where it was possible to follow a line all the way from the gate to the water. On the ground he lost sight of the water as soon as he was among the houses. Then he had to watch where he was going because a boy with two jars was coming the other way.

The boy had hold of one jar by its upper edge. He was balancing the second against his hip. The Professor took the upper one so the boy could move his hand. He expected to give it back right away. The boy went on ahead and looked over his shoulder for him to follow.

Up by a wall, a potter made a place for the two jars on a plank. There was a line of dark paint about the middle of each. The Professor was fairly sure one had been brought from across the sea. He put that one down first. The potter exchanged it for the other one and moved both a little farther from the edge.

Lumen had enough words to say they were interested in the jars. The potter pointed out the one she had made. It was the one the Professor had taken for an import. He moved closer to see how she had finished the line under the handle. In the museum he would have had a label to help him. Here he was going to have to ask her.

“Did she have the other one to look at?” he asked.

The potter went for a third jar, brought it back, and held it up. Its neck had been chipped at the rim. She indicated a part of the design close to the chip, then put the jar aside and went back to work. The Professor thought she had used it as a model. Lumen thought she was showing him what a jar looked like when a boy put it down too quickly. When they asked again, the woman set all three in a row. She had got a better line on the new one. She would have been pleased to have that noticed.

He noticed it then. The new line sat a little lower on the shoulder of the jar, clear of the handle. He asked Lumen to find out why she had moved it.

The potter wet her thumb and smudged a mark on a piece she was still working on. She showed him how she could steady the jar from the side if the paint stopped short of where her thumb needed to go. She had spoiled two lines on the first jar before she thought of moving the line down.

“Tell her I thought the other one had come from over the sea because it was better,” he said.

“Do you want me to say better?”

“Easier to hold while you paint, anyway.”

Lumen told her. The potter put the new jar into the Professor’s hands, then turned it until his thumb found the place she had left for it. He could have held it that way all afternoon.

At the gate he still wanted to know whether he was at the Troy he had come to see. The names in Hittite records had occupied him for weeks. Wilusa was probably this place. A Hittite king had made a treaty with a ruler there. A later letter dealt with a quarrel over Wilusa and referred to it as a matter that had been settled. The Professor could think of a number of occasions when he’d heard that a matter was settled and found out otherwise by morning.

“Did you want us to go looking for a war?” Lumen asked.

“I wanted to know which one.”

“Which one would the potter tell you about?”

He tried to think how he would put the question to her. A person might have remembered a grandfather leaving in a hurry, or an argument over whether to store the grain outside the walls. He had been hoping for a year to write in the notebook. It occurred to him that he might be offered a person's name instead, and have to decide what to do with it.

They went down again. The boy was waiting for one of the jars. He meant to take it through the gate and had found a strap to make it easier to carry. The potter checked the strap, took it off and did it up again. The boy pulled it tight while she held the jar still. There was a moment in which the Professor thought the boy was about to pull it over. Then he saw that the potter had moved her thumb over to stop it.

On the way back up the Professor offered to carry it as far as the gate. The boy shook his head and slipped the strap over his own shoulder. The Professor walked beside him. He wanted to know whether the Professor had been to the place the other jar had come from.

"Possibly," said the Professor.

Lumen waited before she translated that. The boy put the jar down, changed shoulders and started up again.

"Tell him I'd like to go there," the Professor said.

She did. The boy told her he'd like to go there too. At the gate he looked back to see whether the Professor knew the way down without him.

The Helmet on the Ground



Hector puts his helmet down. A scene from the Iliad.

They heard the story of Troy much later, in a room where some of the people had come because they knew which story would be told. A man made room for his daughter to sit beside him. She had heard part of it before and wanted to know how far they would get that night. The storyteller said they would get as far as they got. The girl considered this unsatisfactory and stayed.

The Professor knew the scene he wanted. Hector was about to go back to the fighting. Andromache had come with their little boy. The child reached toward his father and shrank back when he saw the crest of the helmet.

The storyteller let his hand rise slowly, as if he were taking hold of the helmet by its rim. Then he set the helmet down on the floor where everyone could see it. There was no helmet there. Even the girl who wanted to know the ending leaned forward to see where he had put it.

“Look at her father,” Lumen whispered.

The man had put out a hand. His daughter had taken it without looking away.

The Professor remembered the anger of the first lines of the poem. He knew a number of the things Hector was going to say. What he had forgotten was that the parents laughed when the child drew back. There was time for that. There was time for Hector to take his son up after he had taken off the helmet.

At the end, when the people were getting to their feet, the girl went over to the storyteller and asked if he would tell the rest another day. He said there was always another day for the rest. She was old enough to know there might be other arrangements by then. She asked him where he would be tomorrow.

The Professor waited until she had taken her father by the hand again.

“Did you make up the bit about the helmet?” he asked.

Lumen translated. The storyteller shook his head. He had heard it from another man. He could tell them where that man had put the helmet down. When he moved his hand to show them, he put it a little farther off than he had during the story.

Outside, the girl's father had a job getting her to put on her cloak. She had managed quite well without it inside and expected to do the same on the way home. He offered to carry it for her. She let him carry it until they were clear of the people, then asked for it back.

Lumen and the Professor took their time following. There was a bright star low enough to be hidden every time somebody passed between them and the end of the lane. The Professor found himself looking for it again after each person went by.

"I thought I'd spend the evening wondering how the poet knew the city," he said.

"Did you?"

"I was wondering how he knew the child."

The man and the girl turned into a doorway. They heard the girl ask what was for supper and whether there would be enough for another person. Whatever answer she got was given when she was inside.

Lumen asked what he would put in his notebook this time.

"The child was frightened by the helmet."

"Were you there?"

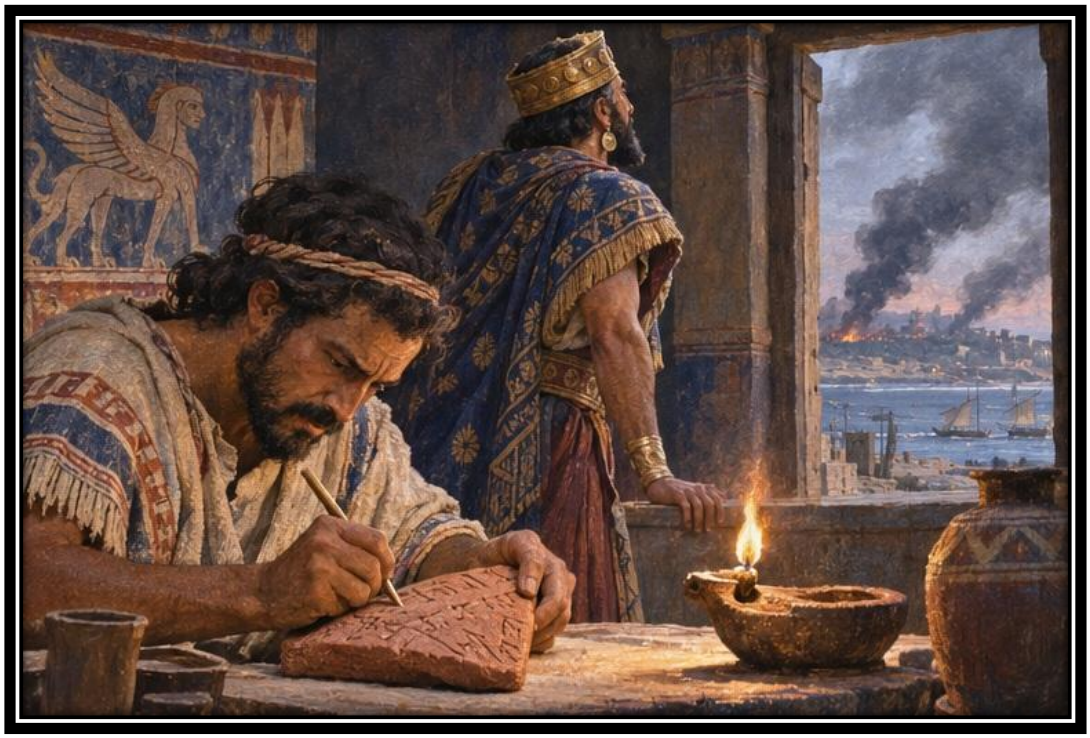
“I was there when somebody told it.”

“Then write that.”

He took a little time to find his pencil. He put down what the storyteller had said about the man he learned it from. Then he wrote that the girl in the room wanted to hear the end. He could remember her asking where the man would be tomorrow. He could not describe her father’s face as well as he could remember the way his hand had opened.

Before they left, the Professor went back to the room. It was empty except for someone picking up a bench at one end. He took hold of the other end and helped put it against the wall. On his way out he looked into the space where the storyteller had set the helmet. He knew exactly where to step to avoid it.

Seven Ships



A scribe at Ugarit prepares a warning.

At Ugarit, the man writing a letter was on his second piece of clay. The first had dried while a decision was being made about what to say. He had tried wetting it and making it smooth again. Finally he put it aside and asked someone to bring more.

The Professor stood where he could see the scribe's hands. The news he had come for lay at the end of a series of marks the scribe was putting down one after another. Enemy ships had come. Settlements had been set on fire. The king said his own soldiers were in Hittite territory and his ships were away in Lukka.

A man had come in to say that a person sent to look down the road had come back. The scribe didn't turn around. Lumen waited until the man went out again.

“Seven ships,” she said.

“Seven, altogether?”

“The letter says seven. It’s still being written.”

The Professor made room for someone who had been waiting to bring water to the scribe. The scribe asked him to set it down. He finished the line before he put his hand out for it.

In the courtyard a woman was trying to find a man who had been sent to speak to the king. She had come from a place where people had seen smoke, and she had a sister living farther down the coast. Her sister went down to the shore for the evening catch and took the children with her. If a warning reached the house before then, all of them would still be there. She had tried to leave the word with the people at the gate. They asked her if she had brought it written down.

“Someone here can write,” the Professor said.

“He’s writing a letter for a king,” Lumen said.

When the scribe came out, the woman went to him and explained what she wanted. She kept looking at the gate while she spoke. A man about to leave had said he could take a message as far as the first village, but he was already tightening his sandal straps. She asked how much of what she said he would have to put down. He wanted to know how many words she could trust a messenger to remember.

The woman thought a moment and said what she would tell her sister if she were already there. She wanted her to bring the children up away from the shore. There was room in her house. The scribe repeated it to see what was missing. She told him the name of the youngest child, so her sister would know whom she meant.

The Professor wanted to know who was aboard the seven ships. The man who had brought the water was able to give him two answers he had heard. Another man, close enough to listen, offered a third. By the time Lumen had worked out what the third man said, the first two were arguing about whether anybody had been close enough to hear the men speak.

He thought of the letter at Amarna. The king had named the people he blamed for raiding his coast. Here the three men could each name somebody, and they still couldn't agree which people had come. He asked Lumen to repeat the one word from the clay he could be sure of.

"Enemy," she said. "That's what they're called in the letter."

The Professor turned to look for the woman. She was back at the gate. The man in sandals was going inland. He had offered to leave the message with someone at the first village, but he couldn't tell her when anybody would take it farther.

"She'll be down at the water by then," the woman said.

A neighbor was coming up the road with a donkey. She called to him before he reached the gate. He would go as far as the first village, he said. She asked him to take her that far. She could go on from there.

Centuries of earth would lie over that city before the tablet could be read again. The Professor had seen it quoted at home. He had gone looking for the number of ships and the name of a people who could have sent them. He had found a man asking for more clay and a woman trying to get a word to her sister.

As they walked out of the courtyard, Lumen told him the woman's message once more so he could remember it. He repeated it. She corrected him on one word. They had reached the gate before he could say it all without stopping.

"Do you think she got there?" he asked.

Lumen looked down the road. They had watched the woman and her neighbor until the two of them turned a corner, where the road began to drop.

"I'd have gone with her as far as the first village," she said.

The Professor looked again and tried to see what she had been looking at. There was no one left on the road that he could see.

The Jar with Two Holes



Mending a jar at Ashkelon.

On the Egyptian wall at Medinet Habu, crowded ships and struggling figures were carved in stone. The Professor had to go back several steps to see the scene as a whole. Men at the ends of ships were falling into the water. Others were being pulled in. Above them, the marks set down for the king would still be there after every man who had worked on the wall had gone home.

Lumen had an easier time with the inscription than she had had with the people at Kommos. She found the names of several groups. Among them was a name the Professor recognized from something he had read about Ashkelon.

“Peleset,” he said.

She made the sound the way she thought she would have heard it nearer to the time. It differed just enough from his version that he asked her to say it again.

“Did they call themselves that?”

“I can tell you who put it on this wall.”

He looked again at a man in the water. The man had one arm up, and the stone made it impossible for him to get the other arm free.

At Ashkelon they went down a narrow passage between walls and found a woman teaching a child to mend a jar. She had already made one hole on either side of a crack. The child had a length of cord and was having trouble getting it to go through the first hole and come out where his hand was waiting. The woman sat on the other side of the jar and watched for the end to appear.

The Professor had expected to look at pots from two places and see what had traveled across the sea. The jar in front of him had a crack. They were trying to see whether it could be used again.

Lumen asked the woman how she knew to make the holes where she had made them. A woman who had come with her had shown her. Lumen thought she said a relation, perhaps the woman’s aunt. She was sure they had come by boat. The Professor wanted to know from where, and Lumen asked. The woman answered with the name of a town they had stopped at. She had spent a long time there and thought that might be the place he meant.

Someone passing through with a basket saw what the child was doing and came back. She had seen jars mended like that and offered to hold the cord at the other end. The child let her do it until he could take hold. Then he asked her to let go. She did. He drew the two sides of the crack together and looked up at the woman who had made the holes.

The Professor asked what they would use the jar for. The woman said they would put something dry in it. Somebody had given her enough grain to fill it partway. It was the person holding the basket.

“Did they come on the same boat?” he asked Lumen.

Lumen asked them. The woman with the basket had lived near there all her life. She spoke to the child in the way people ordinarily spoke in that part of town. He turned his head to answer her. When the woman who had shown him what to do reached out for the cord, he answered her a different way. The Professor could hear how readily he went from one to the other.

The women kept turning the jar back to see if the crack had closed. The child had never mended one before. He wanted to put something in it right away. The woman who had made the holes told him to go around to the other side and hold it with both hands, so she could show him the easiest way to set it down when it was full.

The Professor took out his notebook. He put down the name he had heard at the Egyptian wall. He turned to another page and began to draw the jar. He had got as far as the crack when the woman with the basket held out a handful of grain for the child to put in. The child held his hands together, and a little got between his fingers and fell to the floor.

The women waited while he bent to pick it up. The Professor had the name the king had used for one of the people who came by sea. He went over to the child and asked Lumen to help him ask what his own name was. The child looked up from the floor and told him.

The Professor tried it. The child shook his head and said it again. Then he asked the Professor his name. The Professor gave him the name Lumen used at the cottage. The child got the first part of it and asked him to say the rest more slowly.

The woman with the basket had put it down. She was holding the jar steady so the boy could pick up the last of the grain. The Professor put his notebook away and took over for her. The boy set both hands on the rim and said the Professor’s name again. This time the Professor heard it.

The Island in the Story



The shore at Monhegan.

When they came back to the cottage, Hakan had his cup in the air and the piece of wood on the table in front of him. He put the cup down.

“Did you find a place for it?”

“I found half a dozen,” the Professor said.

“Did you bring any of them back?”

The Professor went to sit. He took his notebook out and opened it at the drawing of the boat on the beach. Under one of the timbers he could see the line the boy had drawn for a stone.

“I can tell you where that stone was.”

Hakan turned the page so he could see. The Professor pointed to it. Hakan looked at the wood, then at the drawing. He could see there was no place in the picture where the wood had been put.

Lumen took off her coat. She went to the sink for the other two cups. The Professor was still showing Hakan how the boy had made him draw the timber longer.

After a little while he told Hakan about the woman above Malia, and about the ships the king of Ugarit said had come. It mattered to him that they were very far apart in time. He put his hand flat on the table, as if he could hold them apart there. Then he told Hakan about the Cretan seafarer in Homer who sailed with men to raid Egypt.

“Was that Odysseus?” Hakan asked.

“That was a man Odysseus said he was.”

Lumen poured for herself and the Professor. Hakan nudged the wood aside so she could put the cups down.

The Professor could hear Odysseus talking to somebody who had no way to know where he was from. He wondered how much of the story the listener would have believed because the speaker knew how a boat moved and what a man had to do to get it clear of shore. He could imagine someone who knew him interrupting at the first sentence and saving everybody a great deal of time.

The Professor reached for the notebook and thought of the woman at Malia. He remembered how she had kept her hand near the straps of the shoes when her daughter came. If she told somebody about that afternoon, he wondered where she would begin.

“I used to put Thera next to Plato’s island,” he said. “He put it beyond the Pillars of Heracles, thousands of years before the eruption. I could still picture the two together. There were people going between the Aegean and Egypt, and in Plato’s story an Egyptian priest tells Solon about an island the sea took.”

“I can see how the story could travel,” Hakan said. “If somebody remembered the water and forgot the island, how would you know which island to put back?”

“I’d want to hear what they told the next person.”

He looked down at the table. From where they had sat at Malia, he had seen timber knocking against stone. The woman had watched the same piece of water for a sail.

“What she saw was a shore,” he said. “If there was somebody she told, I think she’d have started with her brother.”

Hakan waited to see if there would be more. The Professor took his hand off the notebook. He could think of things the woman might have said. He had gone home before she said them.

There was enough daylight to take the wood back down to the shore. Lumen went with him. The water was up against a rock he had stepped across that morning. When he went to put the wood down, he noticed a narrow groove running out from the hole. He brought it closer and rubbed his thumb over it. Something had been through that hole often enough to change its shape.

“Still a boat?” Lumen asked.

“Could be.”

He could see a person pulling a line back and forth until it had worn a groove. He could see the person putting the wood down and reaching for it again. He tried to remember when he had first put the wood on a boat. It had been while he was stooping for it, before he had seen the hole.

He set it up above the water where he had found it. Then he stepped back so Lumen could get past him. She had found another way up over the rocks and stopped halfway to let him see where she had put her foot.

Historical Notes

Crete and Thera

Kommos. Joseph W. Shaw interprets an installation at the harbor as a Middle Minoan slipway and proposes that later waterfront galleries served as shipsheds. The repair, the captain's cargo, and the apprentice's drawing are fictional. The different archaeological structures belong to different phases.
Shaw, Joseph W. "The Earliest Harbour Installations on Aegean Foreshores." International Journal of Nautical Archaeology 48, no. 1 (2019), 85–102.

Knossos. Drains and sanitary installations are among the features of the palace. Archaeologists have interpreted one installation as a toilet that could have been flushed with water poured from a vessel. The flooded threshold and the route of the particular drain in the chapter are imagined.
Hemingway, Colette, and Séan Hemingway. "Minoan Crete." Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. Metropolitan Museum of Art, October 1, 2002.
Angelakis, Andreas N., Giovanni De Feo, Pietro Laureano, and Anastasia Zourou. "Minoan and Etruscan Hydro-Technologies." Water 5, no. 3 (2013), 972–987.

Akrotiri. The Spring Fresco occupied three walls of a small room. The painter and the girl are inventions. The miniature Flotilla Fresco survives from a different building, the West House. Its scene has been read as a nautical ceremony, among other interpretations. The landmarks in the painting do not establish a route for a known voyage.
National Archaeological Museum, Athens. "Flirtation in Nature." Spring Fresco, Akrotiri, Delta Complex, Room D2.
Strasser, Thomas F. "Location and Perspective in the Theran Flotilla Fresco." Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology 23, no. 1 (2010), 3–26.

Thera and Crete. The eruption buried Akrotiri. The exact date remains debated. Tsunami deposits have been reported at Malia and Palaikastro on Crete and at Çeşme on the coast of Anatolia. At Malia, the main settlement on the plateau was above the area identified as inundated in the study. The waiting family is fictional, and the extent of damage to Bronze Age shipping remains unknown. Most Cretan palace centers suffered destruction later, around 1450 BCE. Knossos continued into a period of Mycenaean administration.

Lespez, Laurent, et al. “Discovery of a Tsunami Deposit from the Bronze Age Santorini Eruption at Malia (Crete): Impact, Chronology, Extension.” Scientific Reports 11 (2021), 15487.

Şahoğlu, Vasıf, et al. “Volcanic Ash, Victims, and Tsunami Debris from the Late Bronze Age Thera Eruption Discovered at Çeşme-Bağlararası (Turkey).” Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 119, no. 1 (2022), e2114213118.

Manning, Sturt W. “Second Intermediate Period Date for the Thera (Santorini) Eruption and Historical Implications.” PLOS ONE 17, no. 9 (2022), e0274835.

Metropolitan Museum of Art. “Terracotta Pyxis (Cylindrical Box).” Late Minoan III, object 1999.423.

Bruins, Hendrik J., et al. “Geoarchaeological Tsunami Deposits at Palaikastro (Crete) and the Late Minoan IA Eruption of Santorini.” Journal of Archaeological Science 35, no. 1 (2008), 191–212.

Painters and Cargoes

The painted bull. The Heraklion Archaeological Museum holds the Knossos Bull-Leaping Fresco. At Tell el-Dab'a, the site of ancient Avaris, excavators found fragments of Aegean-style wall paintings that include bull-leaping. How the imagery reached the palace and how the people involved understood it remain open questions. The painters and their conversation are imagined. The book places the visits in narrative order without assigning an exact interval between the paintings.

Heraklion Archaeological Museum. "The Bull-Leaping Fresco." Palace of Knossos.

Bietak, Manfred, Nannó Marinatos, and Clairy Palyvou. Taureador Scenes in Tell el-Dab'a (Avaris) and Knossos. Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2007. Catalog record.

Uluburun. The shipwreck off southern Türkiye dates to the late fourteenth century BCE. Its cargo included copper and tin ingots, glass and luxury goods. The ship in the chapter is imagined from the evidence of that wreck. Its loading port, itinerary and individual crew members are unknown. Cape Gelidonya, a different wreck from around 1200 BCE, offers a related example of a vessel carrying raw metal and scrap.

Institute of Nautical Archaeology. "Uluburun Late Bronze Age Shipwreck Excavation." Project record.

Institute of Nautical Archaeology. "Cape Gelidonya Late Bronze Age Shipwreck Excavation." Project record.

Cyprus and Egypt. The Amarna letters are fourteenth-century BCE diplomatic correspondence. In EA 35 the king of Alashiya, generally identified with Cyprus, calls Pharaoh his brother and reports deaths among his copper workers. In EA 38 the king responds to accusations of raiding and says people from Lukka had attacked his own settlements. The scene at Amarna brings details from separate letters together. The messenger's decision at the courtyard door is fictional.

Moran, William L., trans. The Amarna Letters. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992. EA 35 and EA 38. Catalog record.

Hanson, K. C., trans. "Amarna Tablet 35: Copper, Silver, Lumber, and an Eagle-Omen Interpreter" (EA 35).

Troy and the Sea Peoples

Troy and Wilusa. Bronze Age Troy at Hisarlık had substantial fortifications and imported and locally made Mycenaean-style pottery. The likely identification of Wilusa with Troy makes the Hittite treaty with Alaksandu and the Tawagalawa Letter relevant to disputes in the region. The identification of Ahhiyawa with the Mycenaean Greek world is widely accepted. The texts and destruction layers leave the historical basis of Homer's war open. The potter and her jars are fictional.

British Museum. Troy: Myth and Reality. Large Print Guide. London, 2019. See "Troy VI–VIIa."

Beckman, Gary M., Trevor R. Bryce, and Eric H. Cline. The Ahhiyawa Texts. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011. See text 4 for the Tawagalawa Letter.

The helmet. Hector, Andromache, and their child appear in Book 6 of the Iliad. The scene in which the poet tells it aloud is imagined. Book 24 ends with Hector's funeral. The poem leaves the fall of Troy to other tellings.

Homer. Iliad 6.390–502. Translated by A. S. Kline. Poetry in Translation.

Homer. Iliad 24.782–804. Translated by A. S. Kline. Poetry in Translation.

Ugarit. Letter RS 20.238 reports seven enemy ships and says Ugarit's troops were in Hittite territory and its ships in Lukka. It leaves the attackers unnamed. The letter describes the king's position as he presented it to the ruler of Alashiya. The scribe's surroundings and the message a woman wanted to send her sister are fictional.

Singer, Itamar. "A Political History of Ugarit." In The Calm Before the Storm: Selected Writings of Itamar Singer on the End of the Late Bronze Age in Anatolia and the Levant. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011. See the discussion of RS 20.238.

Medinet Habu and Ashkelon. Ramesses III's reliefs and inscriptions are an Egyptian royal account of conflict involving several named peoples. Peleset is widely linked with the Philistines. A study of ten people buried at Ashkelon found a signal of European-related ancestry in the early Iron Age sample, consistent with some immigration. It does not establish a specific homeland or the identity of any person shown on the wall. The household at Ashkelon is fictional.

Bachhuber, Christoph. "Sea Peoples." The Encyclopedia of Ancient History. Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

Feldman, Michal, et al. "Ancient DNA Sheds Light on the Genetic Origins of Early Iron Age Philistines." Science Advances 5, no. 7 (2019), eaax0061.

What the Stories Remember

A Cretan's raid. In Book 14 of the Odyssey, Odysseus assumes a Cretan identity and tells a story that includes a raid on Egypt. Jeffrey Emanuel examines possible parallels between the invented story and Late Bronze Age maritime activity. The passage gives the Professor a way to think about how a tale can preserve things a storyteller knows about the world even when the speaker's account is invented.

Emanuel, Jeffrey P. "Cretan Lie and Historical Truth: Examining Odysseus' Raid on Egypt in its Late Bronze Age Context." In Donum Natalicium Digitaliter Confectum Gregorio Nagy Septuagenario a Discipulis Collegis Familiaribus Oblatum, edited by V. Bers, D. Elmer, D. Frame, and L. Muellner, 1–41. Center for Hellenic Studies, 2012.

Homer. Odyssey 14.199–359. Translated by A. S. Kline. Poetry in Translation.

Atlantis. Plato's Timaeus and Critias are the surviving ancient starting point for the account. In the Timaeus, Critias says Solon heard it from an Egyptian priest. Plato puts the island beyond the Pillars of Heracles and dates the story thousands of years earlier than the Bronze Age eruption. Thera invites comparison because it was a real island disaster. The surviving evidence leaves open whether any memory of the eruption reached Plato, directly or indirectly.

Plato. Timaeus 20d–25d and Critias 108e–121c. Translated by Benjamin Jowett in The Dialogues of Plato, 3rd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892. Link to the Timaeus excerpt.

National Archaeological Museum, Athens. "Collection of Antiquities of Thera." Akrotiri collection record.

The surviving ancient accounts of Thera describe different events. Herodotus records traditions about settlement on the island. Strabo describes a much later eruption that raised a new island between Thera and Therasia. Egyptologist Joachim Friedrich Quack reviews proposed Egyptian references to the Bronze Age eruption, including the Tempest Stela, and finds the identification unsubstantiated.

Herodotus. Histories 4.147. Translated by G. C. Macaulay. London: Macmillan, 1890.

Strabo. Geography 1.3.16. Translated by Horace Leonard Jones. Loeb Classical Library 49. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1917.

Quack, Joachim Friedrich. "Gibt es in Ägypten schriftliche Quellen zum Thera-Ausbruch?" In 1600 – Kultureller Umbruch im Schatten des Thera-Ausbruchs?, edited by H. Meller, F. Bertemes, H.-R. Bork, and R. Risch, 221–233. Halle (Saale), 2013.