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Within the Pillars of Hercules

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Abstract

The Kiona's hull sliced neatly through the battling waves, her sails pulling forward with the ceaseless breath of the northwestern winds. The boards of the ship hummed beneath Carrice Leon's feet, interlaced with the rhythmic beating of 170 oars against serene waters. In the distance, white spires were beginning to peak just above the starboard horizon, a shimmering beacon in the endless blue. They were making good time, despite the previous day's storm. Carrice looked up to find the sun high in the sky. "Starboard side, in-oars!" Her voice boomed across the length of the deck, ringing clear over the wind and waves below. The crew manning the right side of the deck clattered their oars into oarlocks as the port side continued to row in perfect synchrony. Carrice nodded to herself as the soft wood of the helm's wheel glided smoothly against her hands, nudging the Kiona further starboard. "Oars in," she commanded; more clattering of oars onto the deck ensued. The ship was running with the wind. *Why not show off a little and sail in.* [excerpt]

Keywords

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Comments

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Grace Herron
October 11, 2018

Within the Pillars of Hercules

The *Kiona*'s hull sliced neatly through the battering waves, her sails pulling forward with the ceaseless breath of the northwestern winds. The boards of the ship hummed beneath Carrice Leon's feet, interlaced with the rhythmic beating of 170 oars against serene waters. In the distance, white spires were beginning to peak just above the starboard horizon, a shimmering beacon in the endless blue. They were making good time, despite the previous day's storm. Carrice looked up to find the sun high in the sky. "Starboard side, in-oars!" Her voice boomed across the length of the deck, ringing clear over the wind and waves below. The crew manning the right side of the deck clattered their oars into oarlocks as the port side continued to row in perfect synchrony. Carrice nodded to herself as the soft wood of the helm's wheel glided smoothly against her hands, nudging the *Kiona* further starboard. "Oars in," she commanded; more clattering of oars onto the deck ensued. The ship was running with the wind. *Why not show off a little and sail in.*

The towering marble spires were much larger now, blinding white against the harsh sun. A long stretch of island began to rise on either side of the horizon, creating a crescent around the approaching ship as they entered the bay. Squinting, Carrice searched for a place to anchor. There. She could see *Mylea*, the second fastest trireme in the nation. Carrice's was first, of course. The *Kiona* was the mightiest warship Atlantis had. Her great manila sails billowed out as she slowed for several minutes, eventually coming to rest along the *Mylea*. Normally, Carrice would have chosen to dock alongside her mother's trireme, but she wasn't due to return to Atlantis for at least another two months. As the crew anchored the *Kiona* and began to secure the sails, Carrice looked out across the harbor, absentmindedly searching for something she knew

she wouldn't find, her father's trireme. Although Carrice had no brothers or sisters, she was never doted on by her parents. They were both captains in the Atlantean naval fleet and knew discipline had to be instilled at an early age. In years past, Carrice could admit to resenting their strict parenting, but now she saw the sense in her upbringing, teaching her the resolve and authority needed to captain a ship of her own.

Carrice shook her head, straightened her shoulders, and began inspecting her trireme as the crew's feet kissed ground the first time in months. She noted a number of tears in the sails that would have to be mended, but that wouldn't take too long to repair. The sea-weathered deck was slightly scuffed, made from light brown wood separated by thin strips of Faunite, the most precious metal found in the mines of the southern cliffs only several years ago. Atlanteans were still mining the Faunite metal when Carrice had left for Athens and it had found its way into almost everything on the island. Before taking to sea, rumors had been spreading that some of the alchemists were able to create small suns of light indoors with this metal.

I will have to see what's come of that claim, Carrice thought to herself. Her dark brown hair was in a high pony-tail, braided intricately down to the middle of her back. It swung slightly as she climbed a net down from the ship and onto the dock below, her royal-blue cape fluttering out from behind her left shoulder, signifying her rank as a trierarch, captain of the *Kiona*. Her quick receding footsteps echoed off the boards of the dock.

Carrice hurried into the main marketplace. Just like all the buildings in Atlantis, even the smallest shops and huts were laced with various exquisite metals that glinted between the marble walls, causing them to shine with a luster all their own. Lute music drifted to her ear as she entered the main square of the market. In the center of the green space stood the towering

monument of Poseidon. Marbled waves crashed around the stoic-figure who pierced his trident into the sky as if to strike down Zeus from the very clouds above. Carrice hurried forward and stopped at the base of the monument, which had a wooden trim lined with small notches. She knew she was supposed to salute, to cross her arms in front of her chest, kneel on her right knee and bow her head. It was out of respect for tradition and safe passage through the waters beyond the Pillars of Hercules... but faithfully bowing before the sacred marble rock of Poseidon hadn't saved her father had it? No. He was still gone, taken by terrible seas and the heartless god that rules them. Fists clenched, Carrice spit at the foot of the monument. The gentle lute music that had been floating through the square faltered, and she looked up to see a wide-eyed young boy, mouth hanging open in shock as he clutched the instrument close to his chest. Carrice turned quickly on her heel into one of the side streets as her face glowed an angry red and her eyes set fire to the Earth. She would not bow to any useless monument, especially not one praising a murderer.

The doors of the great hall were opened when she arrived; some of the court officials had already taken their seats. An elongated oval table filled the center of the high-ceilinged room. "Welcome back, Trierarch Leon!" King Orthagon bellowed across the hall. He sat in his throne at the head of the council table, an armed soldier on either side. It looked like he had decided to maintain a trimmed beard while she had been away. His robes reached the floor as he stood from his throne, dark blue and rimmed with gold and silver flecks. There was not a single crease in either his clothes or smile to hint at the slightest imperfection. King Orthagon's sand-colored hair reached down to his shoulders and the crown adorning his head was ornamented with sapphires and diamonds, dancing their splendorous color about the room.

“My King,” She replied, bowing.

“I am glad to see you have returned safely! Any news from beyond the Pillars of Hercules? What triumphs has the *Kiona* seen in her travels?” The king’s laugh echoed throughout the room as he beckoned her closer to the table. Carrice’s seat was two chairs to the right of the king, as it had been for years.

“Many my king,” she informed him while sitting down at the table. “We hit several storms beyond the Pillars, as expected, but after five days we navigated through the worst. Once warmer waters were found, we were able to contribute to the warfront against Athens. *Kiona* sunk twelve Athenian war vessels, each with over a hundred men, before returning to Atlantis.” The king nodded his head approvingly. His hand lay across his chin, a pose perfect for his next statue.

“How did the new armor serve you and your crew,” he asked. The council had been seriously considering the idea of equipping all the army with such protection at the last council meeting before she took to sea.

“The Faunite metal served very well as shields and armor for my trireme, almost impenetrable.”

“Good, good,” the king muttered, seemingly to himself. The grand table was almost filled now. A few members of the council nodded quiet greetings to her. Normally, there would be a few empty seats at these meetings but today everyone would be in attendance.

A few minutes later, all the seats were taken except for the chair at the end of the table, opposite King Orthagon. All were silent as they waited. Then, through the opened doors hobbled a very old woman dressed in tattered brown robes. She had a limp, favoring her left side, and her face was leathery and wrinkled with age. Her cane repeated a slow tapping sound as the woman

made her way to the last chair. All except the king rose and bowed their heads as she approached the table. She took her seat, and everyone sat down once again.

The king's voice boomed out across the table as they began to deliberate trifles and business. The mining of Faunite was extraordinarily successful. Alchemists were still testing with the metal to understand its properties. Another statue will be built atop the southern cliffs in honor of King Orthagon. No fish had been seen or caught for several days, and some citizens were concerned that it was a sign of displeasure from the gods. Carrice rolled her eyes.

King Orthagon shook his head and waved his hand in dismissal. "The fish will return," he stated matter-of-factly. "We have studied these patterns with the most educated of Atlanteans. The fish always return, and so they will again." The rest of the council nodded and murmured assent. "Now for other business. As you all are aware, today is also the day of selection for Poseidon's Sacrifice. Our soothsayer, gifted with the power of sight, will tell us whom within Atlantis has been selected by the gods." The murmuring voices were silenced as all eyes turned to the old woman hunched at the end of the table. Carrice tapped her index finger quietly on the hilt of her sword, which always remained comfortably sheathed on her right hip. *I navigate that passage with my own skill each year. My sword is the only protection I need.* Carrice noticed that the old woman had not said a word since entering the council meeting. The soothsayer's eyes were closed gently, and her lips moved ever so slightly with no sound. Suddenly, her eyes opened wide, her irises a pale, icy blue.

"Carrice Leon." The soothsayer's raspy whisper reached Carrice and held her captive, frozen in her seat as her face began to pale. The woman's voice was hushed but still carried across the silent hall, filling the empty void of space. No one said a word as all eyes turned to

look at the trierarch seated at the table. The sacrifice had never before been someone seated from the council.

Carrice felt herself take in a quick breath as she tried to fight down panic. She noticed all the eyes staring at her. She knew they were looking for a sign of weakness, but she wasn't going to give it to them. Her eyes hardened and looked back at the council members, finally resting on King Orthagon. His forehead was creased in concentration as he rose from his throne, green eyes looking out across the table. After a moment's hesitation, he bowed to the soothsayer slowly.

“And so it shall be. Thus, ends the summer season council meeting. Tomorrow morning at sunrise will be the Departure Ceremony of Trierarch Carrice Leon. Thank you all for your attendance, and thank you for your sight, soothsayer.” The council members began to rise and talk again quietly amongst themselves as they departed, some looking back in Carrice's direction. She remained seated at the table, thinking. Carrice knew that she was supposed to go willingly, to serve her nation and grant them another year of protection, but she could never sacrifice herself to the god who mercilessly killed her father. If this tradition granted them protection, then why had her father's trireme been sunk beyond the treacherous waters of the pillars? Either way, she knew there was nothing she could do. She could not be replaced as a sacrifice. The gods had said who they wanted, and many people already suspected Atlantis had begun to fall out of favor with the gods. Fish were no longer found in the once abundant bay and shipwrecks were becoming more and more common. To make things more complicated, all of the council had just heard her name spoken by the elder. There was no avoiding her fate.

Wait, she thought. Maybe she could do something. Carrice felt an idea forming in her head as the last of the court officials left the meeting hall. What if she refused to give herself over as the sacrifice? If she could kill Poseidon, then Atlantis would never have to give another

sacrifice him. She would be praised as the savior of Atlantis and their nation would have total control over the seas. On a more personal note, she would be sure to make Poseidon pay for the death of her father. As these frantic thoughts began to simmer in Carrice's mind, she looked up to find that King Orthagon and his soldiers were the only ones remaining in the room. As Carrice began to rise from her seat, the king raised a hand in a gesture to stop her.

“Carrice, I'm sorry, but I will have to have your sword for the ceremony tomorrow.” Carrice hesitated and then slowly unsheathed her sword, placing it on the council table. The wrapped handle was worn soft from years of practice and battle, but the blade's edge was kept dangerously sharp. The blade curved upwards slightly and had a small, intricate metal design of swirls climbing from the hilt to the center of the blade. One of the two soldiers stepped forward and carefully picked it up off the table, walking it back through another door and out of sight. As Carrice stood, she sensed the absence of its ever-present weight against her hip. The king sighed, “Carrice, if there was any way I could prevent this I would.”

Carrice shook her head slightly. “No, I have been asked to serve Atlantis, and I shall do so without reservation, like all previous citizens before me.” She bowed to King Orthagon, turned, and walked into the now darkened city of Atlantis.

The next day, the sun had risen to its highest point in the sky as King Orthagon stepped forward to the base of Poseidon's monument. The stony figure towered above the people gathered on the green, rising high above the surrounding marketplace. King Orthagon turned to face the crowd before him while Carrice stood stoically behind him, her eyes unmoving from the horizon. Her hands were overlapped behind her back in standard at-ease position, feet spread a sturdy shoulder-width apart. In the distance, the *Kiona* watched, anchored in the quiet bay,

awaiting Carrice's return. *I'll be back for you*, she thought. Carrice could feel her jaw clenching and unclenching as she tried to breathe slowly and evenly. The king held up his hand to quiet the murmuring crowd before him. All fell silent.

"Great city of Atlantis," his voice resounded between the marble buildings of the square. "Thank you for coming together this sunrise for the annual Departure Ceremony. Before you today stands Carrice Leon, daughter of the noble trierarch Jaakko Leon who came to rest in the sea but five years ago. Carrice Leon has been trierarch of the *Kiona* for over fifteen years and has spent countless hours training in weaponry and tactics to protect our people from the relentless threat of the Athenians who swarm the Mediterranean. *Kiona's* defeat of twelve Athenian war vessels has been a critical to our advantageous edge in the unrelenting battle to overtake Athens. The oracle has spoken, and Carrice Leon has been called by the gods to serve our nation as Poseidon's Sacrifice and be released to the sea as payment to Poseidon. Carrice's absence will be deeply felt. All will honor her death as a noble sacrifice for the greater good of Atlantis so that we may have Poseidon's favor and protection beyond the Pillars of Hercules."

Carrice stepped forward and crossed her arms in front of her chest, kneeling down in salute. King Orthagon turned to stand before her and was handed Carrice's sword by one of the scribes. Carefully, the king approached the monument of Poseidon and carved a single line to join the many others striping its base. "May your father's spirit guide you in the depths of the sea Carrice. Your sacrifice protects the people of Atlantis, and your name will be remembered as long as this island stands."

The ceremonial procession of Atlantis, led by King Orthagon and Carrice, walked quietly down the streetways. All was quiet in the marketplace as more people joined, and the cold

marble buildings eventually gave way to ships and shining water. A tiny sailboat adorned with white roses awaited at the closest dock. Each of the roses had been picked earlier that morning by the townspeople and laid on the boat to send her off. A solemn soldier stood at the helm and bowed to the king as he approached. He was in ceremonial attire instead of armor, a white satin shirt with a red cape flowing down from his right shoulder to his hip. He held out a hand to help Carrice onto the deck. She raised an eyebrow at the soldier and stepped confidently onboard, ignoring the gesture. As she walked past the helm, she noticed an iron weight coiled at its base, decorated with white roses overtop. The same weight that was supposed to be clasped around her ankles, dragging her down into the cold, merciless depths of the sea. She stepped over it and stood at the stern keeping her eyes focused straight ahead on the horizon.

Carrice felt the boat start to drift as the ropes were released, making its way towards open water. It would be several hours until they reached the pillars, where she would be expected to simply walk off the boat without a second thought. The idea didn't sound too dreadful...until she began to think about the water closing around her, how the light would disappear as she sunk further and further from the ocean's surface, what her heartbeat would sound like as her lungs gasped for air they would never find. Carrice shook her head, trying to clear the image from her mind. None of that would be happening today. Not if she could help it. The nameless soldier sailed them into the open ocean in silence. She didn't recognize him, which she decided was probably for the better. If she knew who he was, it would make this harder than it had to be.

After about an hour, the shoreline of Atlantis could just be seen on the horizon. Carrice could now make out the Pillars of Hercules in the distance, two huge black stones, standing straight up from the ocean and separated by a couple hundred yards. Here Carrice and the guard would be expected to wait until nightfall for the sacrifice to be completed. The pillars weren't

connected to any trace of land and acted as a gated entrance to the harshest waters known to mankind. She had sailed through them several times now, each journey more treacherous than the last, but she and the *Kiona* fought with all their might, slicing through and evading Poseidon's storms of temper with unparalleled instinct and precision. While some believed the gods' blessings kept them safe through these waters, Carrice knew it was her own skill that saved the *Kiona* and her crew each voyage. Tonight would be no different.

The small boat floated on the water's surface as the sun finally sunk below the horizon. Stars began to flicker overhead, and the moon's silvery light made the white roses on the deck seem to glow through the darkness. Carrice turned around and began to watch the soldier closely. He had abandoned the helm and now hurried to the front of the sailboat to lower the anchor. If she hadn't seen him previously in training or on another ship, he must be a fairly new recruit. He appeared to be about the same height and build as her, and his sword hung from its scabbard on his left hip. His head tilted up to gauge the moon's position in the sky.

"It's time," he stated bluntly. Carrice nodded carefully and stepped away from the stern. The unnamed soldier went to the helm and dragged the weight forward, brushing off white roses and petals as he did so. He knelt in front of her and began to open the clasp to lock around her ankle. In that moment, Carrice shot her hand forward and unsheathed his sword. He looked up at her in surprise, perfectly exposing his left side. She put her hand on his shoulder and bent down, driving the blade up into his stomach. His eyes were wide, and she watched curiously as the light seemed to drain from them, replaced by the glassy complacency of death. After another moment, she slowly drew out the sword. His body thudded onto the deck, a now much heavier weight than the iron ball ever was. She looked down and saw blood dripping down from the tip onto the

deck. Walking over the edge of the boat, she gathered a bundle of roses and wiped the blood off the sword, staining the white petals a dark red.

Carrice then slid the sword into her own sheath and walked back over to the body. A stream of blood had formed from the body and was running off the side of the boat. She found the clasp of the weight and locked it around the slumped figure's wrist. With a forceful shove, she pushed the body overboard into the inky black waters below. "There is your sacrifice Poseidon," she thundered at the ocean. "A dead man, just like you will be."

Her challenge was met with silence. Carrice's eyes narrowed as she scanned the sea, her newly acquired sword glinting in the moonlight. And then it started, a low whisper of wind that lifted her cape. As she waited, the whisper began to grow stronger, louder. The sails of the tiny sailboat began to flap unrestrained as the loose canvas was beaten by the wind. Carrice rushed to the bow, heaving on the chain to pull up the anchor. A stray rope came loose and snapped across her hands. She lost her grip on the chain for a moment as growing waves began to rock the sailboat violently. Once the anchor was secured, she ran for the helm, and looked out across the suddenly choppy water. Clouds from the direction of open sea had formed into a dark mass and were crackling with thunder in the distance. They were approaching the tiny boat and moving fast, unnaturally fast. Carrice hauled in the sails, causing them to billow with wind. The boat jumped forward and began skipping back towards the crescent shoreline.

Within a few minutes, the storm clouds were right overhead, glowing with a mysterious green tint. The waves bullied the little boat as water rushed over the deck. If this kept up, she would have to start bucketing out the water, but she would surely drown with no one at the helm. Water kept spraying into her eyes, making them sting as she tried to differentiate sky from sea. Then she saw it, a light, just off her port side. She swung the wheel to the left and cut through an

oncoming wave right before it crashed in on her deck. The light was growing quickly. Why was it so bright? The sailboat raced ever closer to Atlantis, tossed cruelly between waves like a toy. Wiping the seawater from her eyes, Carrice realized she could make out the crescent edges of the island. The tide was rising, climbing up the southern cliff face higher than she had ever seen. Waves thrashed against the rocks violently, crumbling the cliff face into the sea. The light ahead from the city continued to grow brighter, glowing a brilliant orange. Then she felt the heat.

The bay came into view, and Carrice gasped in horror. Ships were strewn across the water, some de-masted, some entirely engulfed in flames. Canvas sails drowned, saturated from the salty ocean as they were pulled further and further down, while waves crashed up against what remained of their decks above. Screams and crying echoed across the bay. Carrice steered the sailboat onto the closest shore without entering the bay; there was no way she would survive if people were in the water. They would swamp her boat and drown all of them.

Her feet raced along the rocky shore as the tide continued to rise, lapping at her boots and causing her to slip on the rocks. By the time she reached the shipyard, all was in chaos. People were running in all directions in a cacophony of shouts and screams as water forced its way over the docks. The wind was shrieking and pulling at Carrice's clothes as rain began to sting her eyes. She shoved past a shaking woman crouched on the ground, and her eyes assessed the bay before her. The *Kiona* was jerking up and down in the plunging waves. As Carrice watched, the *Mylea* next to her was caught in a gust of wind that drove her bow into *Kiona's* side, the boards splintering in a gaping hole. Water bombarded the *Kiona*, and she began to bow into the sea, overwhelmed. "No!" Carrice shouted as she splashed down the docks, now covered by several inches of water. A great wave rushed from below, knocking her feet out from under her. She

scrambled back to her feet and splashed back to the land from the docks, unsheathing her sword and screaming curses to the ocean as it claimed her ship.

“Trierarch Leon?” A confused voice cut through her furious string of profanities. Carrice whirled around in a fury and found one of the soldiers a short distance away, watching her in shock. “You should be dead! You’ve brought this wrath upon Atlantis!” Carrice closed the distance between them in four quick strides, kicking the water that was now up to their ankles and raising her sword to meet his unprotected throat. The guard took a step back and found himself pinned between a wall and the sharp blade of Carrice’s sword. Her eyes were wide and wild with rage. The guard took a shaky breath and swallowed nervously, but his eyes looked back with defiance.

“What did you just say to me?” Carrice asked in a dangerously quite voice.

“This is your fault,” the guard answered, refusing to look away and back down. With a yell, Carrice slashed her sword forward and silenced the declaration of her deepest fears. She picked up the engraved faunite shield dropped by the now lifeless soldier and looked around her. The storm was pushing water up the pathways of the marketplace, invading the now empty marble buildings, the current robbing families and stores of everything they owned. Suddenly, the waves pulled back, revealing the stone pathways of Atlantis once more. Her eyes followed the receding water and widened as a huge wave began to rise overhead; her knuckles whitened around the hilt of the sword.

Thunder rumbled overhead as lightning webbed across the sky, causing the great wave before her to flash with light. As she watched, a dark shape from inside the wave was silhouetted against the lightning. Carrice took a step forward, squinting at the hazy figure, and was met by the forceful water as it came crashing down from above. Her body was picked up by the rushing

current as air was pushed from her lungs. Her back slammed into a wall of one of the buildings. Something sharp cut across her leg. She gasped, losing precious air. Which way was up? She couldn't tell as the water tumbled her like a pebble in a stream.

Her body was thrown across the ground as the wave began to recede. Carrice gasped for breath, coughing water onto the street beside her. Her thigh throbbed, and she noticed a long gash down the outside. Blood was beginning to slowly seep out of her body, creating vines of watery red down the sides of her leg. Wincing, Carrice sat up and reached around her left shoulder to rip off her sodden blue cape. She looked for her sword, realizing that it was no longer in her hand. At least she kept hold of her shield. A few yards away, the blade glinted under another flash of lightning. Carrice hobbled over to it and cut the cape, tying a strip roughly around the wound on her leg. As she looked up, she found herself staring into the green of the main square from the side-street where she was tossed.

In front of the monument of Poseidon, a large orb of shifting water floated in the middle of the square, seeming to move with its own hypnotic pattern of contained currents. Carrice thought she could make out a darkened shadow from within. As she watched, the orb began to fall away, water coursing down the shell to reveal a hollow inside. A figure emerged from the orb; dark wavy hair floated around his head as though still in water, despite the rain that was plastering Carrice's stray hairs to her forehead. His skin was dark and armored, and his eyes raged with the fierceness of a stormy sea. He was twice as tall as any man she had ever seen. In his hand, he held an intricately carved silver trident. The center held a large sapphire that flashed with each thunder released from above. Each point of his trident glared with cold, sharpened, double-edged blades. With a wave of his hand, the orb dissipated into rain as though it never was there. Poseidon, the god who killed her father.

His steps thudded heavy as he walked forward across the green, he began to turn his head. Carrice pressed herself up against one of the buildings so she was just out of his sight, careful not to make a sound. She waited a moment, then shifted slightly so she could see him again. Her grip tightened around the sword. Vengeance would be hers soon, and then all of this would be over. Poseidon had stopped, examining the monument before him. The marble waves were shining with water from the unceasing rain. As he stood with his back to her, Carrice breathed in sharply and sprinted out from behind the building. She hurled herself at the massive figure, raising her sword high above her head to slice down Poseidon's back. Too late, she realized he had seen her coming.

The muscles in his back tensed suddenly, and Carrice found her sword interlocked with the silver trident. She tried to pull back, but her weapon was wedged between the blades. "How dare you take him from me!" Carrice screamed up at that massive figure. Her eyes burned with an untamed fire as her mind sunk into an animalistic rage. Poseidon's eyes danced with cruel amusement as his wrist flicked violently, snapping her sword in half. The staff of the trident whirled around from below, sweeping out her feet and knocking her to the ground. Poseidon towered over her as the rain pelted down. With a deafening roar, Poseidon thrust his trident up to the sky, perfectly matching the monument behind him. Carrice rolled out of the way as he slammed the bladed points deep into the ground before him. The entire island tremored as another crack of thunder shook the Earth. A deep crack opened through the square, splitting buildings and crumbling the stone pathways of Atlantis.

Carrice's pulse quickened as the land opened beneath her. She grasped desperately at the soil as her legs dropped into the widening crevice. As her upper body started to slide, Carrice stabbed the half of her sword into the ground. The island's shuddering stopped. She looked down

and saw deep roots and rock sticking out from the now exposed earth. At the bottom, water was beginning to creep up the fissure. With a deep breath, Carrice hauled herself back over the side of the crevice, her injured leg piercing with protest. She rolled onto her side and lifted herself up onto her hands and knees. Raising her head, Carrice found herself kneeling before a wooden rim, streaked with single lines. The freshest gash marked by the lightest wood underneath, the notch that was meant for her. She pounded her fist against the ground. *No. I will not kneel before you.*

Carrice raised herself up and turned to see Poseidon hurling his trident to the Earth again, smashing it back into the island below. Carrice was thrown back to the ground. Marble began to crumble from the sides of buildings as another earthquake shuddered through Atlantis. The crevice opened wider and she rolled just out of its reach. She looked down and saw the water flowing in faster as the crack widened between the island. Atlantis was surrounded by churning waters as a giant whirlpool formed around the crescent island.

As Carrice tried to get up, she saw Poseidon raise his hand and a wave rose from the crevice, crashing into her and sending her sputtering back to the ground. Coughing hard and gasping for air, Carrice's eyes darted frantically as she hurried to stand. She could see Poseidon raising his arm for another blow with his trident. She raced forward, blocking out the sharp pain in her thigh, and slashed her broken sword at the arm holding the trident. She didn't stop to see his reaction, darting around to tear at anything exposed, the edge of her sword stinging like a viper. Suddenly, the trident slammed forward once forcefully into her shield, the metal breaking around her arm. With a second blow, Carrice felt the wind stolen from her chest as several ribs cracked, and she crumpled to the ground. She gasped for breath as the edges of her vision dimmed. The rain was so cold. She looked up to see Poseidon standing over her. His eyes were icy and merciless. Looking down, a cruel smirk inched across his face, and he spat at her feet.

Carrice felt the cold waters of death and found she had no energy left to fight it. With a final crack, Poseidon raised his trident up to the sky, and Atlantis shuddered one last time before drowning for all its splendor.