Fall of the Dam

By Crescentius
lexi and his brother Englebert were collecting saffron plants over in Nowo Glen, a large hilly valley near the village of Nowotown. Though just a small town, its citizens, though not financially wealthy, have lived prosperous lives as a bourgeois band of merchants. And they have never had to live with a drop of worry on their faces, because their mayor has always informed them that nothing can go wrong as long as they do their jobs and collect their taxes.

Alexi and Englebert, however, were only poor farmers. Their mother had died during a heated confrontation with the Militia when the boys were only ten and eight years old. Now they have to live with the burden of doing most of the chores for their forlorn father, Maynard, who still solemnly offers his wife fresh, white poppies frequently at her grave.

Five years later, Alexi had grown to be a spirited, willful teenage boy who always looked after his brother. They both had short, bushy auburn hair, blue and brown eyes respectively, and turned-up noses. They represented the genuine family of farmers: wake up at cockcrow, get washed, milk the cows, tend to the wheat, and climb the hills of Nowo Glen to pick saffron so their father could use it for seasoning. And when their chores were done, they played in the fields, sometimes with their neighbors.

“Can we sit down, brother?” asked Englebert. “I’m tired. It was a long climb.”

Alexi was beginning to agree with him. They had been bending over collecting saffron plants in the hot sun and were a little fatigued from the long climb up the hill. The hills of the Glen were not the easiest to scale up.

“Sure, ten minutes rest. But you must sit with me. You know how papa doesn’t want you wandering off.”
They sat carefully on the grass, watching the waterfall spit out water from the higher ledges. On the ledge above them was the wondrous Nowo Dam that made the town prosperous. It was built long ago by their ancestors to ensure that there would not be floods for the river flowed near the town. Since the town was founded on a plain, it would be more vulnerable to natural disasters. So the masons insisted they build a dam made of marble bricks. And it has stood for centuries, making it an immortal wonder for the town.

Alexi lied down for a few minutes, looking directly at the dam. He was not really paying much attention to the scenery though; he just wanted to rest. But after just a closer glimpse, Alexi caught something odd in the dam. Maybe it was a mirage, but he could have sworn he noticed a visible crack in the stone.

He needed to alert his brother. “Bertie, look! Do you see that crack in the dam?”

His brother’s attention span was worse than his, so it also took him some time to see the crack. “I do. Do you think?”

Alexi never noticed an abnormality like this and did not know how to respond. It seemed like a possible threat though, so they both deduced that they needed to somehow warn the townsfolk so they could repair the dam in time, this time with sturdier brick. The marble was all ready eroding, enough to gradually cause the stone to crack.

“All right, let’s go tell papa about this. We can’t just stand here and gawk,” Alexi affirmed.

They both thought they had enough saffron in their baskets for the day. The dam was a bigger priority, however. They carefully walked down the steep path back to the outskirts of Nowotown where the brothers’ farm was.
When they got down, they ran like tigers to the farmhouse where Maynard was peacefully sitting at the table, slicing bread and expecting the boys to return. They jolted through the door, both out of breath.

“Gadzooks! What’s the commotion? It looks like you were chased by a pack of wolves,” his father said awestruck.

“We...have some news to break,” Alexi said, coughing midsentence.

“Go on,” their father was listening intently.

“We were both in the glen, and we saw that the dam is wearing out. It’s going to collapse.”

Now their father’s face looked sterner and unconvinced. “Boys, didn’t I tell you several times that you never should lie to me? Enough of the childish pranks!”

“But it’s true. We both saw it,” Alexi stammered.

“Come on, the marble dam has protected Nowotown since the days of yore. The masons before us had assured that the dam is unbreakable.”

Now they both seemed to be caught in a corner. They did not know how to convince their father unless he saw it for himself.

“Maybe if you come out and look at it, papa, then you will believe us.”

Maynard thought about it, scratching his shaggy brown beard. He still believed in the notion that people should not listen to the mouths of babes because chances were they were only fooling around with their elders. But what if they were right?

He came to a decision. “All right, let’s take a look at it at dawn. But if you are proven wrong, the paddle with you! Now go back to the field and sow!”

The boys felt relieved. They could now try to prove it to their old man that this was an urgent threat.

The next morning, they hiked the grassy hill back up to the waterfall. There Maynard took a closer look at the condition of the dam. It was again hardly visible
from his point-of-view but he did eventually find the crack formed from the top of the dam.

“I don’t believe it,” he admitted. “You were right. And if possible, this might end serious if a storm came.”

Alexi came up with an idea. “We ought to relocate to higher ground. It would be for the better of our safety. I don’t think the town will survive like this.”

Maynard nodded, knowing his son had good intentions. But he also knew of the caveats involved. They now need to convince their friends and neighbors.

“And the ultimate problem arises…it’s us three and the town. Who would listen to only a few voices?”

They did not know how to fully address the problem to the citizenry yet, but they soon thought they could start off with telling their next-door neighbors, who also had a farm right next to theirs.

Right on this farm lived a more comfortable family, who while they still lived within a budget, they still had enough to go into town and shop for new clothes and equipment. The farm was owned by a stringent but loving man named Eduard. He had a light brown mane of hair and always wore a black sunhat when he did the plowing. He married a beautiful flaxen woman named Colombe, who always had a well-kept braid at the back.

They have one daughter named Aina. She is a year older than Alexi. She usually wore a bonnet whenever she worked in the fields, covering her long, thick butterscotch hair made into a French braid. She is Alexi’s best friend; they often played in the fields on their free time. And sometimes at night, they would sneak out to the pond to count the fireflies. But their relationship was merely platonic; mainly because her father was uneasy that a girl of her status would go out with someone slightly poorer than her. But one love that she always had was of her horses and always took good care of them in the stable.
Aina was not playing with her horses at the moment, however. She was toiling with sweat in the dry climate, harvesting the wheat and herding the cattle. She was definitely in the mood for company, anything to get her out of work for a couple hours.

“Hello Aina!” shouted Alexi from afar.

“Alexi! Bertie! What brings you here this afternoon?” asked Aina. She felt really glad to see them. “If you want to play for a little, I will arrang…” She then frowned. “…why the faces? You two look pale. What’s the trouble?”

Alexi did not know how to say the words. “I-I,” he swallowed. “I have some terrifying news to share with you. It’s not going to be easy saying this, but…”

“What’s going on? Just tell me.”

“Well, Bertie and I just came down the hill and it turns out…the dam is breaking.”

Aina did not believe them. She thought it was some childish prank like their father.

“It’s not funny, Alexi. So you’re saying the great dam of ‘unbreakable stone’ that has stood for ages is collapsing? I hate being joked around,” she snapped.

“You were like our father when we called it to his attention, too. But after we took him down to the Glen, he believed us. It’s true, cross my heart.”

Aina still had a look of skepticism across her face. Could she trust them? Are the ancient stories about the dam now proven untrue? She decided to go along with them. Alexi had never lied to Aina yet.

“Preposterous! You think you’re going to try to woo my daughter with a story like that? You’re such a good storyteller, Alexi,” Aina’s father laughed, coming out of the house.

Alexi was now annoyed. “Look, sir, I’m not pulling any funny business to try to take Aina from you, I’m just telling her the truth. The dam is breaking, and if
you still do not believe me, then I have nothing more to say. Sorry for bothering you.”

The brothers started to walk off.

“Wait, Alexi!” Aina exclaimed. “Look, I believe you. You were never a liar. If what you’re saying is really happening, then maybe we should talk to the mayor and help spread the word around.”

That was someone Alexi felt uneasy addressing the situation first, but it was worth a try. They decided to go downtown to the town hall where the mayor presided over the state of affairs. There they saw the secretary, currently guarding the mayor’s office and bookkeeping.

“Excuse me. We are here to see the mayor if he’s not busy,” said Alexi.

The secretary looked at them dismissively. “Children are not allowed. Any issues you can put in the idea box.”

They did not give up hope though. They still persisted in trying to see the mayor, while the secretary still remained unflinching.

“Sorry, no one is to see the mayor, especially to pesky runts like you. If you have a grievance, please submit it to the box. Surely you can spell ‘box’. Good day.”

“But, madam, the town is in serious danger. If we don’t address this to the mayor at once, there will be consequences,” Aina politely said.

The secretary finally flinched. She seemed to have no other choice. “All right. I will let the mayor know that you need to discuss something with him in private. But I must caution you he hates children, and chances are will never kindly listen to brats.”

They stepped inside the mayor’s office, seeing the mayor staring blankly at a vellum bill with a quill in hand. The mayor seemed embarrassed, not fully
expecting guests at this time. He then got up from his chair, standing posh with a gilded cane.

“I see my fool of a secretary cannot even refuse guests today.”

This was Lamont J. Tumper. He became mayor twelve years ago because of his rhetoric to make Nowotown a “fine place less of trouble and riffraff.” He had the hair of a fox; orange-colored, with a hint of gold in the sunlight. He had a very stern personality. He believed that the citizens of Nowotown should never worry about anything that could possibly befall them, while imposing heavy taxation on his people. He was a very deceitful and corrupt man, yet the townspeople still seemed to respect him.

Standing by him was his chief administrator, Miltiades Penny. He was just as shifty and unscrupulous as the mayor was; in some ways, he was the one in control, especially over finances and the Militia. He was bald in center and had aging gray hairs, but always wore his favorite felt hat to hide his baldness. He also wore a monocle in his right eye, and wore high heels to make him more pompous to those who dared question authority.

“All right, what is it, children?” the mayor asked, looking down at the children with a grimacing look.

All three were a little intimidated by his looks.

“S-sir, we have an urgent crisis that we need to discuss with you, if you have the time,” said Alexi, slightly stammering, trying to hide his fearful expression.

The mayor grumbled. “What is it, children? What is so important that you skipped a nice day to play?”

“All right, it’s a trick. You know children. They’re playing with your mind,” said Miltiades suspiciously.

The mayor hushed him for the very first time in a meeting. “No, I want to hear what they want. Now go on.”
Alexi grunted.”Well, sir, we want you take a look at the dam. We have reason to believe that it is collapsing.”

The mayor sat stunned. “So, you think the great dam is dying? The dam that our forefathers built to ensure safety for this town?”

All the children nodded.

The mayor then grinned, trying to let out a belly laugh. “Pshaw, how ridiculous! The dam’s an impenetrable wall! Nothing can destroy it!”

The children frowned. They had hoped the mayor would take their urgency seriously. But it turned out he never really listened.

“Now I have to admit. I heartedly thank you for the jokes, kids. But seriously, what is really your problem? Do you want us to build you a pool? Or give you vanilla frosting on your cakes? Is that it?”

Now the children scowled. They were serious, and they were trying their hardest to persuade him to treat this as a serious threat.

“Look, we’re serious. If you want us to show you later on, we will. We can carry you on our backs if we have to, but I don’t want you to turn your back on us, in our moment of peril,” Alexi firmly stated.

The mayor sat down and thought smugly. He really was not taking them seriously. He really was a man of judgmental character.

Ultimately his answer was a simple no. “The town’s going to do well. Officer Miltiades, please escort these children out.”

“Gladly,” Miltiades agreed and started to show them out the door.

But the children did not back down. They still stood their ground, hoping the mayor would have a change of mind. “Will you please listen to reason? We’re telling the truth. You’re making a fatal mistake.”
The mayor shook his head. “Children just don’t understand their elders.” He then summoned the Militia. “Fine. Guards, send them out! I’m not afraid to silence anyone who doesn’t get out!”

Now the children had no choice. The Militia came in stern and firm with their pistols. They marched the children out at gunpoint, all looking down as they were forced outside.

And now they were back at the beginning. Since the mayor would not help them out, they unfortunately had to think of solutions themselves. But they were just kids. They did not know anything about masonry. What they needed to do was simply a democratic approach.

“Well, if the governor won’t address the situation maybe we can address it to the governed,” Alexi suggested.

“Do you think that’ll work?” asked Bertie.

“Well, it’s worth a try. I know it seems a bit more difficult with just three children. But we need to do something desperate.”

Aina grasped Alexi’s arm. “I’m behind you.”

“Right. Now we just need to know how to rally.”

“We can try the public hall in town. We can help set up the assembly, print posters in town and other sundries.”

“Okay, that’s a start. Let’s try to assemble everyone this evening. We must make this happen.”

Everyone nodded and went to work.

Aina and Englebert went directly to the printer to create some posters. They spread an abundant number of them in town. They then rendezvoused with Alexi back at their farm, exhausted and drenched in sweat.

“We have done it, Alexi. We’ve made posters all over town. Do you mind if I wash before the forum?”
Alexi nodded. “Certainly, we should all wash up and get dressed. I’ll let papa know and we shall have it tonight.”

The hall was packed. The townspeople must have thought it was an important assembly. Bread and ale were served at the refreshment table. People mingled and talked about life in their jobs.

A half an hour had passed and it was now time for Alexi to present his speech. He was slightly nervous. He did not know what the outcome was going to be.

Maynard clanked a spoon against the ale tankard. “Hear ye, everyone! Hear ye! ‘Tis time to be seated!”

The room decrescendoed to a complete silence. Everyone gathered around in their seats. Alexi then solemnly stepped up to the podium, still trembling a little since this was the first ever speech he had given. He cleared his throat, took a deep breath, and started speaking.

“People of Nowotown. I have gathered you all to address an unusual problem. Many of you don’t know about this, so I’ll try to explain to the best of what I’ve seen. So my brother and I traveled up to the Glen, going about our routine. And suddenly, we saw something that deserves everyone’s attention and we must act now for the future of our town…”

Everyone murmured in dismay.

“What my brother and I saw…a crack in the dam…it’s breaking.”

The murmurs grew louder.

“I don’t want anyone to panic. But if we act together with all the hammers we have, we can rebuild the dam with sturdier stone so the town doesn’t flood.”

Now the townspeople clamored. Some of them laughed. They did not seem at all convinced.
Aina looked at Alexi with a sad face and shook her head. This was not going the way he had planned. Although she herself had not seen the anomaly yet, she did not like to see her friend get hurt.

Shouts of “Liar!” blazed through the hall. Many jeered at the thought of the dam finally giving in. Many people were all ready leaving.

“What’s your evidence, pauper?” insulted one townsman.

“Everyone, if you just listen to me, I’m telling the truth. The dam is breaking and we must do everything we can to prevent a massive flood. Go see for yourselves if you’re not satisfied!” Alexi exclaimed.

Several just grumbled disdainfully and left. Alexi stood stunned, looking at the sullen expressions of everyone still in the room, realizing the stench of disgrace that plagued his own village. He was now at a loss for words, looking down with despair.

Aina, Bertie, and Maynard immediately got up to try to console him. However, before Aina could even come near him, her father grabbed her by the arm.

“Let’s go, Aina. I don’t want you near this liar again!” Eduard angrily said as he spit in Alexi’s face and carried her away.

Alexi kneeled to the floor in tears. Never had his family seen him so upset. He tried his very best to convince everyone only to be a failure. He just looked so down, plangent and not wanting to look at anyone.

His father and Englebert tried to snap him out of it. Alexi looked like he was in a trance, absolutely depressed and mute. They could not do anything about it.

They took him home and gave him some water, hoping that it would get rid of his shock. He was starting to come around, yet still was not saying a word. He was entirely in despair. It seemed like the end for him. No matter what difference
he was trying to make, mostly no one believed him. Perhaps that was his consequence for living in reality.

“Let’s let him sleep. Maybe he will be better the morrow,” Alexi’s father explained to Englebert.

Englebert did not say anything, but he nodded. They closed the door and hoped that their kin would heal.

The next day, Alexi woke up to a knock. He slept thoroughly through the night which he was surprised that he was able to do. He did not feel any better though.

“Wake up, Lexie! We’re making breakfast!” shouted his father.

But it was no use. Alexi was confined to his room as worse as Gregor Samsa. He was not in the mood to see anyone after the humiliation he received. He just stared blankly out the window, tracing the patterns on the curtain.

“He won’t come,” he told Englebert.

“Knock louder,” Englebert suggested, eager to try anything.

“Maybe I could.”

He knocked louder, but there was still no response. They both gave up trying to get Alexi to come out. They just left him to his thoughts until he finally came out.

Alexi still did not come out by dinnertime. They left his food out in case he wanted to eat it in his room. He did not even bother to open the door to touch it. It left sitting cold.

It was unfortunate. Alexi could not eat or drink. He just sat like a statue in his room unconscious of his surroundings. He may as well have been asleep, but in a more ethereal state.
The next day proved much worse. They still could not get him out of his room. They were so desperate that they secretly invited Aina over to try to get Alexi out. They hoped a dear friend could help.

Aina knocked on the door. “Lexie? Are you in there? It’s me, Aina. Your best friend. Can you come out? We want to see you!” she said.

No response. He just lied down on his bed looking at the ceiling emotionless. He was still completely unconscious from everyone he knew.

There was now a pounding at the door. “For Pete’s sake, Lexie! Open up! We’re worried about you! Come out! Or at least let us in!”

It was no use. Another day went by without Alexi coming out. His father and brother lost hope. If he was not going to come out, he was going to starve and thirst himself to death. Aina was afraid she was going to lose him. He was her only true friend. They had so much fun in their lives that it was hard to think about the worst.

Another day passed him by. His father and brother tried once more to persuade him to come out early that morning. But he still would not get out. The best they could do was work early in the fields so it would distract them.

Alexi still lied on his bed entranced, sighing heavily. He seemed so disenchanted from life that he felt he could not do anything anymore. But he knew he had to get out. He could not find it in his heart to rot in his cell. He needed to free himself. If no one was going to support him, then he might as well be on his own.

It was an hour after dawn. He waited for the opportunity to sneak out without his father or brother suspecting his escape. So once he did not hear any footsteps inside the house, he took a hammer and sneakily tiptoed out of his room, and closed the door. He took the back way out of the house; he knew his father well in that he normally started his work day by the barn which was right next to
the house. So he tiptoed out the back way. He crouched and crawled his way through the tall grass. After he got out, he climbed the hill again, back to the Glen to take a look at the dam.

After all this time, this was the first in that he thought it seemed like a long one. He was all ready weakened from the climb. His spirits were so broken that he did not find the stamina in him to care. But he was now up, and he decided to go see what he could do.

And then it seemed hopeless. He kneeled to the ground, his bones too weak to help him.

_Is this my fate? Should I just accept that there’s nothing I can do?_ he wondered to himself.

He slid his knees towards the ledge. He looked down. It looked like a long drop. But at the same time, it was a serene view.

And then he looked at the dam. He just stared motionless at the dam with his hammer sweating his left hand. He knew what he had to do. He slowly got up. He tottered a little almost towards the cliff, but managed to keep his balance.

“So it’s true?” asked a voice.

It was Eduard. He climbed up to collect some dandelions. Little did he realize that his assumptions about Alexi were wrong. He was telling the truth all along.

“The dam – it’s collapsing. I’m sorry I doubted you, boy.”

Alexi was now slightly relieved. Maybe soon people will start paying attention.

“Yes, sir. Now you owe me a bigger apology for dragging my best friend away.”
Eduard blushed. “Oh yes. My apologies about that too. I guess I was at first angry and envious that my daughter would befriend a pauper like you. But even then I suppose a wealth of naught cannot replace a heart of gold.”

Alexi smiled. Now that they reconciled, they tried to figure out how they were going to address the townspeople. The previous meeting was a disaster. Alexi did not know how he was going to persuade them to listen to reason this time.

“Leave it to me, Alexi. If there’s a thing that townspeople will listen to, it’s a respected bourgeois madman like me.”

They climbed back down to Alexi’s farm. Maynard and Englebert were harvesting barley when they saw their son finally outside after three days.

“So you’re finally out!” Maynard cried, as he trampled through the grass to give him a hug. “We thought you were going to languish in your room. No food, no drink…”

“I’m better now, papa,” Alexi said.

And then he saw Aina and Colombe. Tears flowed down Aina’s face. She went over to hug him too. Alexi never thought in his life he would be treated like a celebrity.

“I thought I would never see you again,” Aina cried.

Alexi smiled. “Yes, it would be spooky to have a skeleton in my room.”

Eduard chuckled, but soon his smile faded. “I saw the dam, Colombe. It turns out – much to my disbelief – the boy turned out to be right. The dam has a crack from the crest and it’s spreading down the spillway. I’m afraid it may burst at any moment and we may experience a big deluge.”

“So the town will flood?” asked Colombe with dismay.

“Yes. I’m afraid the river is going to overflow into Nowotown. It may be submerged if we don’t stand up and work.”
“So should we try addressing the situation again?” Alexi asked as he shrugged. “I mean maybe now with more believers the town may finally act.”

“It’s a shot,” Maynard said. “We can talk to the mayor and we can help set it up tonight.”

Alexi had reservations over that. “No, not the mayor. We were forced out by the Militia for even proposing the idea. No, I feel like we must hold it our own way. A general assembly without the state’s help.”

“I agree with my brother,” Englebert said.

Aina went along with them. “Aye. I’m afraid this issue now rests with only the people.”

They all agreed and went back to the town hall. But when they got there it was too late: They were all ready holding a discussion over the dam. Many people were there, and thus a quorum was all ready present. All of them looked for seats so they could listen.

Mayor Tumper was all ready talking at the podium.

“Fellow citizens. It has come to my attention that there are rumors concerning the dam that our fathers had built centuries before. The dam, according to a few sources, is collapsing. And do you know who those sources are? The words of babes. Hear me? A few schoolchildren not very educated to the most astute recently told me that the dam will soon fall and the town will be devoured in water.”

A few people snickered in the audience. They apparently never took a look at the dam yet.

The mayor continued. “Here’s my response to this situation…” He then knuckled the podium like a gavel. “Bosh! Whatever these children were saying are all lies! The masons were genius architects who rivaled even the fair villages of the north and south! The dam is never flawed! It is made of sturdy stone. Erosion
cannot hit it, not even by the will of God himself. It is a perfect wonder of architecture! And these children are telling us no?”

“I now implore you to throw down your hammers, chisels, what have you! The dam as we know is indestructible and forever will be. Go back home and resume your lives as normal humans do!”

Eduard could not hold anymore of this. It was either take a stand against hundreds of others or do nothing. But he had to take a stand.

“Ohjection!” Eduard shouted.

The townspeople clamored loudly. The mayor scanned the room to look for the person who objected.

“Oh Eduardo! You?” the mayor scoffed. “Now you think the dam is in disrepair?”

Eduard took a deep breath and confirmed it was true. “You may have fooled everyone, Your Excellency, but none of them have taken a look at the dam. I just have, and so did my daughter and our neighbors, just now. It is beyond a doubt the dam is collapsing. It is corrigeable, however. So we need to not throw down our hammers. If we don’t act now, water will start gushing out at any moment. And if we still do nothing, we will all drown.”

The audience now broke into a furious uproar. Many now started to lose their trust in Eduard, who until now they respected as a faithful citizen. Shouts of “Order!” by Miltiades Penny were being drowned out by the mob that went after both families.

“Eduard’s crazy! Throw him in the asylum!” threatened one villager.

“No, throw all of them in the asylum!” shouted another.

Some of the townspeople rushed over to defend them; they now believed in the story that the dam was collapsing. They tried to quell the mob as best they could.
“Should we send in the Militia?” asked Miltiades.

“No, I think we have them cornered,” replied the mayor as they watched apparent justice from the podium like watching poor gladiators fighting lions in an arena.

Eduard and Maynard quickly led their families to the door before they were grabbed.

“Stop!” yelled a warbling voice. The mob finally stopped.

It was an old man who was better known as the town’s “Prophet” though no one took him seriously. He normally spelled forecasts for the town and sometimes did palm reading for anyone’s future if they desperately wanted to know. He stood and approached the angry townspeople with a grave face.

“They’re not crazy. It is all true. If you must know, then take a look outside!” he said.

Alexi left the hall for a moment. He looked at the sky. It was very overcast. The clouds had completely covered the dusk-painted sky. It was now mainly blue-gray clouds blanketing the setting sun, grouping together to create a storm.

Alexi went back inside and told everyone the news.

“The prophet may be right. I think we are due for a storm,” he affirmed.

“But is it a serious storm, boy?” asked an angry townsman.

“Aye, a sprinkle’s nothin’!” yelled another.

“Ah the ignorance of humans is ever so present. You do not get the seriousness of this storm. The Great Tempest is upon us! If we don’t evacuate to high ground, you will all perish along with your homes! If you choose to stay, you best know how to swim!”

It did not work. The majority of the people were still swayed towards the mayor’s opinion, and they did not want those spreading premonitions that were considered false to them. The fury among them intensified.
“Lock him in the asylum with the others!” was the consensual answer.

Soon as Alexi and the others were violently dragged outside, a large roll of thunder rumbled. It was a sound that was not commonly heard in a typical thunderstorm. The thunder grew louder until suddenly a lightning bolt struck the tree just outside the hall.

The people quickly panicked and Alexi’s kith and kin were let go. There was not a moment to lose. Lightning could strike the weakness of the dam at any moment. They needed to warn everyone that they needed to reach the glen before the dam collapsed.

“Hurry! Follow me!” Alexi ordered with everyone lining up behind him. Everyone was in a big panic. Alexi understood why – he was trembling himself.

“You heard him! One side follow me! Others will go with the prophet!” Eduard shouted.

Alexi climbed up the hill with his family. He made sure his father and brother reached the summit safely. Aina helped the handicapped up. Colombe and the prophet carried some of the children on their backs. They even helped many of the Militia up despite their former allegiance with the mayor. Overall, it was a challenging trek up. People were blinded by the downpour of rain. Breezy winds accompanied the rain, holding a few of them back. Alexi and Aina had to climb back down on occasion to hold on to the frail so they would not get blown away.

By the time they made it up to the Glen, the dam was finally giving out. They were forced to watch the dam succumb to the overflow of rainwater. Water gushed out rapidly like it was free from a dreadful prison. The river turned into a deadly current, many tree branches and wildlife lost in the rapids. And it did not take long for the river to reach Nowotown. Excessive rainwater flooded everywhere, from farm to fairground. It was a horrific tragedy to see – people were crying in tears. Everyone was so lachrymose to what they had just observed.
firsthand – watching much of their town submerge underwater. Crops destroyed, debris flew everywhere, everyone’s personal belongings completely soaked, and lives lost. The entire reputation of the town was completely gone before their very eyes.

It was agonizing for Alexi to look at. Unlike the mayor and his cronies, he could understand how everyone felt. He was after all a citizen himself. And like a community, he wanted to do the right thing and look out for everyone, even if he was just a poor farm boy.

After a while, the storm subsided. The heavy rains stopped and the moon’s halo could be shown breaching through the stratocumuli. Not that it helped everyone; the townspeople were completely soaked. Their clothes were wrinkled and wet. Wringing was heard frequently. The ground became muddy. Many people were sliding. It was not enough traction for everybody to hold on to.

The townsfolk looked down at the remains of the town. It was mostly underwater. It looked so unfathomable to look at. The river made Nowotown look like a network of Venetian canals. People would have to sail to get to their homes, not that much of their property could be salvaged anyway. They would have to start anew.

Children were crying. Many were weeping while hugged by their mothers, who cried along with them. Some of them felt embarrassed that they ever doubted Alexi and Eduard for telling the truth. Some even wanted to build effigies of Mayor Tumper and throw darts at it.

Colombe did a good job building a fire for everybody not just to keep them warm but to dry their clothes. She also tended to the lame and sick. She too was sniffling after being completely drenched in her best shawl.

“Well, that is it, Alexi,” she explained. “My husband is setting up camp right now. Before long, we will start rationing.”
Alexi thanked Colombe. “Do you know what Aina is doing?”

“I’m right here!” Aina called him. “I’m just collecting some saffron and barley so we can spice up a soup.”

“So what do we do now? How long will we be camped up here?” asked a townsman.

“About a couple days, I think,” Alexi estimated. “Hopefully the water will diminish then. We just need everyone’s cooperation in the meantime. Very important.”

“We were wrong to misjudge you, lad. We were just too stubborn and cynical to believe you. We’ve been proven wrong,” said a townsman.

“They’re right, Alexi. Alas, it just came too late,” Alexi’s father said.

Alexi nodded and grunted, as he just sat and watched over the deluge below.

“What we need to do now is build another dam – a new dam. One that is far sturdier than the other one. And we should inspect it every few years to see if it needs new repairs,” Maynard added.

Many townspeople nodded with Maynard, realizing now that they all needed to learn from their mistakes.

Again, Alexi nodded, looking down at the town.

“So where do you think the mayor and his cabinet went, his assistant and secretary?” Aina asked curiously.

“They couldn’t have died, did they?” Englebert asked.

Alexi looked at the town for a moment, then looked at his brother and friend and simply responded, “Probably not. They are too cowardly to die.”

He got up and accompanied his family to help out with the soup.