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Objective II Exploration.

Where there is ice, there is life.

Archian arrived at Zainab earlier this morning. He didn't feel the cold, but an undescribed aura of the wilderness and never ending darkness made him more grumpy and introverted than usual.

He didn't bring Tajga with him, she was too young for a mission like this, and also she didn't have thick fur like his.

Chillaks Jori also stayed back.

Yes - all white fur creatures like Jori were well prepared and adapted perfectly to environments like this one here at Zainab. Nevertheless bringing him here would be dangerous. The natives would consider the creature a danger, which wouldn't help at all if they sought advice from the Selenian people.

The Shistavanen was looking for any elders in the city, but all of them were hidden by younger generations inside of the buildings for their own protection. That pushed Archian to expand his search to the nearby villages.

His main aim was to collect detailed information about one of the myths - a story which said that there are non-sapient made tunnels connecting to the central part of the city... but not only.

Archian's canine posture was passing by small snow covered houses made only from ice. They weren't circle shaped, but more of a ziggurat structure without any flat areas. Everything was built with a 30 degree angle. That let falling snow culminate additional resistance to the strong wind and extra isolation of the building.

There was no electricity used in this village. All the warmth created inside was coming from burned fat of Humbabas and Ganjuko - both of them transported to the planet for use by society. Sadly no one expected that they could be smart enough to escape, and in Humbabas case - adapt to the surrounding ice cold desert.

Archian could scent the Ganjuko around, for this reason he stayed closer to the central part of the village, with a large chimney made out from bones mixed with rocks and earth collected during warmer months, with a burning heart of fire.

That helped with visibility in the village, and kept larger predators away from its borders with support from the same but smaller structures between every house at the end of the small town.

Surprisingly one elderly lady was collecting fresh, powdery, snow from her house to melt into water inside, as Archian found out from the books about the traditions of the natives. He stopped by and asked her about the myth.

"Five miles away from here are the ice hills of a rising star. Every year we place a small sacrifice to the gods. We believe that some of them are coming to visit us that way and warm our hearts. But now they are full of vengeance—do not go there or you will die." The lady quickly turned around and avoided Archian's eyes. She came inside and moved an ice block to cover the entrance to her house.

The Shistavanen didn't have a choice, he was on a mission. He started a journey to the Icy Hills. It didn't take him long.

He climbed a natural structure and looked around. On his right five big Humbabas were trying to dig out fresh roots and plants from under the snow cover. One of them was trying to cut and force a lone tree to fall down, and later eat all the hard fruit from it.

But it wasn't the only one interested in the tree, or at least what it could offer.

The lone creature was hiding behind the small hill - with a strong, hard beak ready to strike.

The muscles had moved, and seconds later Humbubas was lying dead, with Ganjuko enjoying the fresh meat and signaling it with a loud screech.

The rest of the herbivores were running in Archian's direction, but suddenly they disappeared inside of the Icy rocks. The Shistavanen followed them and found the entrance to the cave—a surprisingly warm cave, visibly increased in size by Humbabas claws.

The Arconan came inside and found out that the cave is connected to the web of tunnels. He possibly discovered the mythological connection to the Zainab. But where was all this heat coming from? And here Archian reminded himself about the second part of the myths, which says that tunnels were the origin of life and food for everyone who looked for a shelter.

With his journey continuing, the Shista followed the tunnel until he slid down from the wall by accident... The clear ice—almost like a mirror—had confused him and he'd lost his step.

He didn't lose consciousness, but felt heat coming from his legs, while still lying down on his back, maybe he broke both of them.

He lifted himself up and looked at his legs - they were alright, but what was in front of him was a bugger surprise!

Whole ice chamber! Which was full of trees with fresh fruits, small mammals and a few Humbabas walking around and eating. He couldn't believe it.

The ice above was like a greenhouse accumulating all heat inside, and melting ice to the small river, a source of water important for all of these plants.

This will help in the fight with gods for Arcona and all population of Zainab in case of evacuation only if Archian will find a right tunnel to the city.

Archian gasped, stood up and went for a longer journey than he intended to.