

*Mata Nui*

# *The Online Game*

By Mark Durham

I

## “The Dream”

It is dark. A light appears far, far away. From the light comes streaking a large, carved stone. The carvings are that of a kind and peaceful face. The stone lands upright, hard upon the ground. Its glow illuminates the smaller rocks scattered around it. One rock begins to move, and it rolls closer to the stone. Other rocks also begin to move, until six neat piles of rocks have formed around the carved stone.

Suddenly, another stone lands hard upon the ground nearby. This stone is dark and jagged, like basalt or obsidian, with a dark and jagged face etched within it. From the bottom of the dark stone, an inky black darkness spreads, infecting the ground and spreading quickly until it overtakes the carved stone, knocking it over onto the ground. The carved stone sinks slowly into the ground, as if in a deep sleep. Three smaller jagged black rocks emerge from the ground and surround the dark stone.

From the light, six new stones are sent. They are the same light color and shape as the carved stone, but they are unmarked, and of a size between that of the carved stone and the small rocks which still surround it. The six stones land upon the ground surrounding the dark stone.

Soon, the three black rocks surrounding the dark stone disintegrate. Once they are gone, cracks begin to form along the bottom of the dark stone. The cracks race up the dark stone until it completely shatters and explodes.

## “On the Beach”

I awake to find myself upon the beach. I recall that I saw this island from far overhead in a dream, just before the sound of the waves washing upon the shore and birds flying about the sky brought me to consciousness. Indeed, I feel as though I myself fell from the sky and landed here.

Or perhaps, it was this mysterious canister in front of me that has fallen from the sky and landed here. I do not know. In fact, I cannot even recall who I am.

I move toward the canister. It is a light gray metal. Seaweed clings to the bottom. The rounded top appears to have been blown off. There are overly large, deep footprints that leave from the bottom of the canister and lead to the rocky hills to my right.

I follow the footprints to my right. They end up ahead where a fresh flow of lava meets the sea, steam blowing across the rocks. It is too hot here. I must turn back.

But before I do, I see him. The tall, shadowy stranger stands alone upon the steaming rocks, his back to me. He turns and glances at me, his eyes as fiery as the lava that flows around him. No words are exchanged. He turns back, and then he is gone.

As I head back to where I started, I see a large stone face carved into the side of the cliff. I had not noticed it behind me earlier. Its large mouth appears to be a portal to somewhere, but I am unable to coax it open.

I turn around and find myself back where I had started. On my left in the distance, a bird circles an unusual rocky outcropping. Near the top, the stone is smooth and conical. Are those steps I see? I turn to look more closely.

Those *must* be steps. There are many more which lead all the way from the beach to the top of the rock. But there, in front of the rock, someone is motioning to me.

She is a bright blue creature with large feet and almost no torso. Her matching blue mask reveals only her glowing yellow eyes. Her overall look is angular, almost mechanical. Behind her, a large green boat floats in the water.

She pleads to me, “Help! Help me! My village has been attacked!”

I ask, “Who are you?”

“My name is Maku, of Ga-Koro,” she replies. “Ga-Koro lies between the sea and Lake Naho, down the coast. It’s a great village of many Matoran, and our leader is the Turaga Nokama. I fear much of it has been destroyed by now!”

I ask, “What happened?”

Maku hesitates, unsure of where to start. “I — I was away when the Rahi attacked, and when I returned the monsters were everywhere, destroying everything in sight. Nokama and the others barricaded themselves into a hut to hide, but the Rahi broke the pump and the hut sank beneath the waves.”

Suddenly, I have a vision. I can see the inhabitants of the floating green village of Ga-Koro going about their daily lives. Then, ominously, a dark monster quickly arises out of the water. The inhabitants all huddle together in one small hut, all except for the one poor soul who is thrown into the hut by the monster. Then, all goes dark.

Maku and her pleading bring me back to the here and now. “Please, there is no time. My people are in great danger. Will you help me?”

I do not know who I am or where I am going. I only know Maku needs my help. “Yes, I will help you.”

Maku directs me. “Go to Ga-Koro and find Nokama. She is very wise and might have a plan for escape! I will try to find Gali. If the Rahi are near the village, she is the only one who can defeat them. She’s on a great quest and may be very far away.

“The only way to get to Ga-Koro from here is by sea, so you must take my boat, and I will search for the Toa on foot. Good luck! And tell Nokama that I am safe!”

I take to my boat and bounce across the waves as I head to Ga-Koro.

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## “Ga-Koro”

I arrive in the calm waters of Ga-Koro. Smoke is billowing into the air from one of the floating green dome buildings. In the distance, three waterfalls cascade down from a cliff carved into a mysterious mask shape. I walk to the gate to the village.

The gate is locked closed. There are rocks of various sizes strewn about the sand. A large rock hangs from one side of the gate. On the other side hangs a large shell. At the top of the gate is a strange text of circular letters. Somewhere, in the back of my mind, I can make out the writing: GA-KORO.

Beneath the letters is a circle within a circle. Each circle has a small blue stone. As I add rocks to the shell, the inner circle rotates and the blue stones grow closer together. When the two blue stones are aligned, the gate opens and I can proceed onto the large green floating pads of Ga-Koro.

Much destruction is evident in the dome buildings. Most are flooded. In one I discover an unusual crystal, a Lightstone, and I pick it up.

At the far end of one of the pads, a strange pump-like machine sits idle. A large pipe sticks up out of the water. I take a closer look at the pipe.

“Who is that? Who’s there?” comes from the pipe. “Hurry my friend — you are our only hope!”

“Maku sent me to rescue you!” I reply.

“Maku escaped? We were so worried about her!” says the pipe. “We are trapped here underwater! The door is stuck and we can’t open it! If the village pumps are repaired, the hut will rise to the surface, and we can escape. The Rahi smashed them and pieces fell into the water. If you can find the missing piece and put it back in the pump machine, it will float us back up!

“I left a Lightstone in my hut. It might help you see underwater. Please hurry!”

“Hold on. I’ll be right back!” is all I can think to say.

“Hurry back! I don’t know how much longer we can survive in here, and the Rahi may return!”

I find a pool from which I can descend into the water.

Below, there is no indication of the destruction above, only peaceful waters and the swimming creatures of the ocean.

I swim toward the pipe, and a glimmer catches my eye.

Here are those with whom I spoke above. They motion to me and pound upon the door. I must find the missing piece of the pump!

I am desperate to find it, when suddenly I remember the Lightstone. I take it out and shine it upon the waters. What once was just another starfish upon the rocks instead gleams with a metallic reflection. This must be the missing piece! I retrieve it and head back to the pump.

I place the gear back into the pump and press the button. The pump springs to life and starts rumbling. Soon, the submerged green dome pops back to the surface and the grateful villagers pour forth.

But there is no time for celebration. What must certainly be the Rahi also springs forth from the water. It begins its attack upon the villagers, when suddenly another creature emerges from the sea to defend them. A fierce battle ensues until both drag each other back into the water.

The Rahi is the first to appear, but its mask is missing. It falls stunned off to the side to reveal the defender, triumphantly holding the Rahi's gruesome mask. This victorious defender can only be Gali, the Toa of whom Maku spoke earlier.

Gali does not stick around to celebrate her victory however. As quickly as she arrived, she is gone. I notice that the Rahi is being tended to by one of the villagers.

"This is the Tarakava that attacked the village," the villager tells me. "Don't be afraid... he is no longer under the dark influence of Makuta.

"Shhh... he is resting," she says, although I am not aware that I am making any noise. "He has been through a great ordeal. In time he may be tamed. Sometimes Rahi become infected by Makuta's darkness. Only by removing their mask can they be saved."

The villagers quickly return to their fishing and daily lives. There is much work to do to repair the village. Before I leave, I speak to the village elder, Turaga Nokama.

"Thank you for rescuing us. You are bold and true to your word. All the Matoran of Ga-Koro owe you their gratitude. For once I am glad that Maku snuck away from the village, so that she could find you!" she praised.

"Your eyes are filled with questions about the mysteries of Mata Nui my friend. Giving you some of the answers you seek is small payment for your deeds, but I offer you what knowledge I can.

“Our astrologer has seen great changes in the skies, and has read the dark future of Mata Nui. The Toa have come and begun their mighty quests to save us from the Makuta. And yet here, in the midst of this upheaval, are you, a brave wanderer in this dangerous land.”

“Who am I?” I ask.

“I think someone has plans for you that are greater than your stature would suggest. Perhaps you are to be a hero like the Toa. I do not know.” She replied. “The Matoran have forgotten their civilization. Even the Turaga do not have record of all that has come before.

“But the ocean remembers. Like history, the water holds many secrets in its forbidden depths. It surrounds Mata Nui, and it covers it; it watches the island as it sleeps, and remembers. It caught the Toa gently when they descended, and delivered them to us.

“You are an absolute in these uncertain times. Your past is forgotten, and your future is an empty book. You must find your own destiny, my brave adventurer.”

“Who is Gali?” I ask.

“Gali, the Toa of water, the great hero of Ga-Koro. Like the other Toa, she descended from the heavens to save us from the Makuta. She is wise, and strong, and quick.

“Gali is the protector of the sea, and of the lakes and rivers that feed it. Her Mask of Power lets her breathe freely beneath the waves.”

“What of Maku?” I ask.

“Maku often sneaks out of the village to spy on Huki, the Koli champion. She tells me she is just practicing her boating, but I know the truth. And it is far too dangerous for her to be outside the village now. For her own safety, I will forbid her to go, even though her wandering saved us this time.

“If in your travels to Po-Koro, you should meet Huki, tell him she is safe. He may have heard of the attack and will be worried.”

“Thank you. Goodbye,” is all I could think to say. Maku has told me that she has heard of trouble in Po-Koro.

“Good luck, brave adventurer,” she replies.

I visit with the astrologer before I leave Ga-Koro. I ask her what she is doing.

“I am the astrologer. I watch the stars, and the water. I am charting changes in the skies. Many important things are happening around Mata Nui, and many more will happen. I use the telescope on the cliff. It tells what will happen, and when,” she tells me.

“How do I use the telescope?” I ask.

“It’s very simple,” she replies. “Around the base of the telescope are pictures. They are constellations, patterns of stars in the night sky, and markings that show the prophecies of legends.

“Each picture has a red star in it. When the Red Star reaches a certain place in the heavens, it means something important will happen here on Mata Nui: one of the prophecies. When you look through the telescope, you will see many stars, and one of them is the Red Star.

“Look at the constellations near the Red Star. They will look like the ones in the pictures. When the Red Star is exactly where it is shown in one of the pictures, then a prophecy may come true.

“If something changes in the sky, it is my job to change the pictures, so that I can better see the future. Even though we Matoran remember the prophecies, nothing is certain... the future can change.

“If you can read the numbers in the telescope, it is even easier to tell the future.

“Have you any other questions for me?” the Astrologer asks. “The heavens are in turmoil, and I must chart their fluctuations.”

I have no further questions, so I leave. I find the boat, now moored at the dock, and sail back to Ta-Wahi to get a closer look at the mysterious telescope.

## “The Telescope”

I climb up the many steps to the telescope that sits atop a column out over the water. There are ten panels engraved upon its outside, each with one red stone.

Each panel appears to portend an event. The panels are divided into two parts: top and bottom. Each top picture is adorned with stars. The biggest star is always embellished with a red stone.

The bottom panels seem to tell a story. I recognize the cylindrical vessel, the tall fiery stranger, and Toa Gali. Other panels feature creatures I have not seen before and events I do not yet understand.

Inside the telescope, I discover the amazing controls of this magnificent machine. There are circles here like those at the very bottom of the panels outside, only the images inside these circles are changing. In the center of the display, I can clearly see the stars in the heavens. As I scan the sky, I pause when a bright red star comes into view.

As I leave the telescope, I see what I did not before: a small stone monument. As I gaze upon it, I recall the strange dream from which I awoke earlier.



## “Ta-Koro”

Down on the beach once more, I decide again to follow the footsteps in the sand that lead away from the cylindrical vessel. Perhaps the lava has cooled down enough for me to pass.

As I arrive at the edge of the beach, I notice that the stranger I saw before is indeed gone. But, as I had hoped, the lava has cooled enough for me to continue to follow his path.

I see in the distance a fortified city at the base of the volcano. I decide to investigate. Outside the gate to the city, I encounter two guards. One cautions: “Jala says we’ve got to keep a sharp lookout for Rahi.” The other allows that I may pass, and then he adds helpfully that I am to use the winch room if the bridge is down.

The bridge is down, so I head for what I think is the winch room, only to discover someone looking over a three-dimensional map.

He speaks to me: “We have lost communications with Ga-Koro, but I have no Matoran to spare for a reconnaissance unit. There are never enough good warriors to send against the Rahi. You look stout, traveler... you should consider a career in the Guard.”

I ask, “Who are you?”

“I am Jala, Captain of the Guard,” he replies. “It’s my job to protect the city against the Rahi. I knew they were getting stronger, but no one in the city believed me... until the beasts overran the Tren Krom redoubt.

“I lost a lot of good warriors that day. Then Tahu arrived, and now we know why the Rahi are on the move. Vakama says he’ll save us, but I don’t see the point in putting ALL our hope in him. You can never have too much security.”

“What is a Rahi?” I wonder aloud.

“The Rahi serve the Makuta,” says Jala. “They are horrible beasts, ruthless and fierce. Some can fly, others walk along the ground, some, I have heard, even tunnel beneath it. We have battled many of them.

“In recent times they have become bolder, and have forced us back to here. Ta-Koro used to reach all the way to the coast; the Charred Jungle used to be a green, peaceful place, but in the fury of our battles it was burnt.

“But we are Ta-Koro Matoran, and we will not surrender. And now Tahu, the great fire-spirit, has come to lead us against them. They can attack at any time, although always when it is least expected.

“That is why we must always be on guard. I have studied them extensively... it is possible that they once were normal creatures, like the others that inhabit Mata Nui, until the Makuta turned them... although I am not certain of this.

“If it is true, there may be another way to fight them. Until then we must patrol our stockades and our trenches day and night, and keep the guard-fires burning.”

I ask, “What is Ta-Koro?”

Jala replies, “Ta-Koro is the city in the great Lake of Fire, in the shadow of the Mangai, the great volcano. This fortress guards the bridge to it. Many Matoran live there — surely you’ve heard of it?

“Most of the people in Ta-Koro farm the lava fields to the north, beneath the Mangai. Many are surfers, riding the lava rapids for sport. Our people are the most courageous warriors in all of Mata Nui, and we are not afraid to challenge the Makuta’s beasts if we must...

“But we cannot confront the enemy alone, and I do not have faith in the other cities of Mata Nui. If they do not join with us in the defense, we will all perish, Toa or not!”

I can think of nothing else to ask him, so I bid Jala goodbye. “May Tahu protect you, traveler,” he replies, and then he goes back to his map.

Suddenly I remember why I am here. I am just about to ask Jala where the winch room is when I see it off to the right.

I pull on the lever and the bridge stones start rising up out of the lava.

As the gate rises, I pass into Ta-Koro. There are many Matoran here. I stop one as he is passing through. He is carrying something.

“Hey, here is the lava surfboard you asked me to hang on to,” he says. I don’t recall asking anyone to hold onto a lava surfboard, but I accept it anyway. “Lava surfing is dangerous, but fun!” he tells me as he departs.

In front of me, two Matoran are talking. “The Rahi have taken the Tren Krom break. No more farming up there!” says one. The other notices me.

“Want to give us a hand? A farmer’s work is never done. It’s up to us to farm all the heat in Ta-Koro.”

Something in the back of my mind tells me that I'm not much of a farmer, so I move on. To the right, another Matoran is busy cleaning. He speaks to me: "Now that Tahu's here, I've got to keep the Shrine spotless. With all the ash and smoke around here, it's hard to keep that Shrine clean! The Shrine is where Tahu will bring the Kanohi."

I move forward to the entrance of a tunnel, but the tunnel is closed. As I turn around to leave, I discover a room off to one side from which the light of a fire is flickering. I enter the room and discover someone standing before the fire. He is taller than the other Matoran here in Ta-Koro, and he carries a Firestaff. He turns to face me, bows slightly, and then speaks.

"So. You have found your way back, after all. You are brave. I do not know what brought you to this city, but you should take care... there are some who remember you. The temper of the Ta-Koro Matoran boils as swiftly as the great Mangai in whose shadow we live.

"But in this, our first hour of hope, you may find the villagers' patience to be greater than usual. Yes, there is hope in Ta-Koro. Tahu is here. It was Jala who found him. He caught him in a trap intended for a Rahi. It was almost the end of my brave Captain, and of his famous Guard!"

His tale of how Jala trapped Tahu is so eloquent and vivid that I feel as if I am there. First, the trap is set. Then, out of the darkness, comes a tall stranger. I know at once from his description that it is the same stranger I saw leaving the beach earlier.

Suddenly, the trap is sprung, and tall spikes of wood surround the stranger. He is not trapped for long, though. He raises a sword and it ignites in flame. In no time at all, he has cut down the spikes of his trap with a single fiery sweep of his arm.

Resigned to a fight, Jala and his Guard descend upon the stranger. But just before the battle begins, the stranger is recognized as Tahu and the Matoran bow before him.

"The people are elated, but I know that their courage will be tested now more than ever," my host continues after the tale is complete. "Tahu's arrival marks the first step in a great struggle. And I have much to do. I am sorry for having so little time for you. As you know, there is a lot to do. Is there anything more you would ask of me?"

"How do you know me?" I ask.

"This is hardly the time for jokes," he replies. "Have you forgotten all of your great deeds, and also the thing that drove you away from us?"

Embarrassed to admit that I have, I press on. "Who are you?"

"I am Vakama," he says. "I am the Turaga of this village. I am the Legend-Keeper, the Takara-Leader, He of the Great Firestaff who farms the Mangai's burning core. Have your

aimless wanderings caused you to forget everything? Surely you still have the Board that I gave you, for that was a special gift. Lava Surfing is a difficult skill, and no Matoran other than those that dwell in Ta-Koro have knowledge of it. It would be a pity if you have forgotten it entirely.”

Inwardly pleased that I do indeed now have the lava surfing board, I ask about the stranger. “Who is Tahu?”

Vakama replies: “He will save us. He is come from the heavens, as foretold in the ancient Legends of our city, to battle the Makuta with his Sword of Fire and release us from tyranny. He is a great hero, and will struggle against the Rahi of the Makuta, and will face great dangers.

“The Legends prophecy six heroes descend from the heavens to Mata Nui, and of them Tahu is the fiercest. But his passage to Mata Nui has left him... uncertain. He has needed help to understand his long-awaited quest.

“I have told Tahu all I know of the Legends of Mata Nui, and of the Masks of Power. I have done all I can. Now it is up to him to adventure into the wilderness, and find a way to defeat the Makuta.”

Then Vakama’s mood changes. He clearly has no more time for me.

“Forgive me, I have much work to do,” he says as he turns back to his fire. “I am preparing for the arrival of another... I am not certain, but the stars have revealed a new prophecy, which I do not yet fully understand...”

I leave Vakama and head out over the bridge. On my way back to the beach, I notice a much smaller bridge off to the right. It leads into the charred forest. I decide to follow it.

I quickly become disoriented in the forest. All of the charred trees look the same! I don’t know where I have been and where I am going. I feel as though I have been walking in circles.

Then I see them. Someone has marked some of the trees along the path with an ‘X’. I notice that I can scratch the mark again, making it more visible and allowing me to keep track of where I have been.

I also happen across a sign marking the way to the beach. I step out of the forest, turn around, and head back in. I am confident that I will not get lost this time.

As I walk along the path, I come across a stranger who is pacing back and forth very slowly. “I am Kapura,” he says. “Are you the Makuta?”

I remember Nokama speaking of the Makuta infecting the Rahi’s masks. I ask, “What is the Makuta?”

"If you do not know what is the Makuta, then I guess you are not it," he replies. "That is good. Jala says I have to be careful of the Makuta when I am in the forest. He says the Makuta is everywhere. He means Rahi. Monsters. Things you can see. But I know the Makuta is here now, in these burnt trees, and in the dead soil. All of these things were destroyed by the Makuta, but the Makuta never left them. That is how he becomes strong. That is what the Makuta does. He destroys things.

"I think the forest looks very beautiful this way too. And when it burned, you could see all the fires perform their Great Takara all the way to the sea, and it was very beautiful."

I long to learn more about the Makuta, but my curiosity about this slow pacing gets the best of me and I ask him, "What are you doing?"

"I am practicing," he replies. "Vakama says that even though I am slow, I may be faster than all the others, and travel very far. He says I must practice. Jala says I am being silly. I practice often."

Kapura's pacing has me disoriented again. I ask him, "Where am I?"

"You are where you are," Kapura says. "If I practice, I can be where I am not. I think I can feel it. It is hot here where I am, but where I am not is cold, and I think I can feel it. I must practice more.

"The island has many places to visit. I want to see all of them. But the others do not like to travel. Mata Nui is very big.

"Vakama says that in the beginning of time, Mata Nui fell from the sky, and landed here. The Makuta came after him and made him fall asleep, and sent his monsters out across the world to control it, and destroy its beautiful things, and to make the Matoran his slaves.

"Vakama has told us to wait for more creatures to fall from the sky, who will save us. I think one of them landed on the beach. I saw it fall, when I was practicing before.

"Vakama knows more. You should ask him. He lives in Ta-Koro."

Kapura's pacing has worn me down. I decide it is best not to mention that I have just spoken with Vakama. Instead, I bid him goodbye. I have decided to head back to the boat and try to find a way to Po-Koro to tell Huki that Maku is safe. I need to head to Ga-Koro first, for I remember that the worker at the dock can tell me the way to sail to Po-Wahi, where I am certain to find Po-Koro.

## “Po-Koro”

Po-Wahi is a dry, arid land of sand and stone. At first, I think there is no one at the dock to greet me. But as I look around, I notice a solitary merchant and his wares.

“Eh? What’s that?” he asks. “Sorry. Don’t get too many travelers around Po-Wahi these days. What can I do for you? Need a boat? Information? Or a souvenir, maybe?”

Hopeful to get some tips about the local culture, I ask “What is Po-Wahi?”

“Po-Wahi is... well, there’s not much to it, really, mostly sand... lots of sand. But there are the canyons, which are real pretty to look at, if the sun or the Rahi don’t get you first... and the Path of Prophecies, which the ancient carvers made.

“Po-Koro’s a decent place, too, and don’t miss the games. Most everyone around Mata Nui turns up to see a Koli match, when they’re on. Haven’t been too many visitors lately, though.”

I thank the merchant for his assistance and set out on foot, following the stone path laid before me. “Stay outta the sun!” he calls out to me as I leave.

I soon come to a fork in the road and must choose my path. The writing is becoming more familiar to me now. Is my memory returning? Yes or no, I choose the path to the left, certain that it will take me to Po-Koro.

The path is long and monotonous, but eventually I come to another fork in the road. A stone carver is here, hard at work. As I admire his work, he speaks to me.

“Hot enough for ya?” he asks. “Another Hafu original...” he says as he gestures toward his work. “Wow... Sometimes I impress myself! Can you guess what it is yet?”

I can’t, so I shake my head “No”.

He seems to sense that I am not here for idle chit-chat. “If you’re looking for Po-Koro, traveler, take the right road. My right. Or is it your right?”

I thank him for the help, such as it is, and head out along the path to the right. My right. And soon, I see it.

A marvelous stone gate stands before me. The path is overlooked by six magnificent, enormous stone faces. I wonder if these are also the work of Hafu, the stone carver with whom I just spoke?

I walk through the gate and into the middle of a thriving marketplace. The sounds of animals and bartering fill the air. I speak with a nearby merchant.

“Hello, stranger! Are you looking for a good Koli ball? Let me recommend the Comet, our most popular model.”

“What is a Koli ball?” I ask.

“Why, Koli balls are for playing Koli, of course,” he replies. “You’d want a Comet — our most popular model. Trading for two Husi Pecking Birds, or the equivalent.”

I ask him, “Where do you get your Koli balls?”

“Well, now, that’s privileged information, my friend. Let’s just say I have a secret source...”

“How do I buy a Koli ball?” I wonder aloud.

“We trade here, like in the rest of the bazaar,” he answers. “If you’ve got something worth trading, I’ll give you a Koli ball for it!”

I don’t have anything to trade, so I tell him goodbye.

“Come back anytime... Our Comet balls are the best on Mata Nui. Everyone wants one! Don’t be the only Matoran in Po-Koro without a Comet!”

I see a hut with an open door to my left. I hear someone carving stone within it. I decide to enter the hut. The tall figure within greets me.

“Hail, adventurer! You have come at an unhappy time in Po-Koro, I fear. I am about to announce to my people the news that the next Koli match will have to be cancelled. I do not think even great Pohatu could play Koli at a time like this.”

“Who are you?” I ask.

“I am Onewa, Turaga of the village of Po-Koro,” he replies. “The Matoran here are master carvers, and their work is the envy of all Mata Nui. But today I am not carving works of art. Instead, I am fashioning beds.

“I am struggling to bring comfort to the sick people of this village, but it is a fleeting solace. We know nothing of this illness, how long it might last, or where it comes from. Left unattended, I fear the Madness...”

He does not finish his sentence. Curious, I ask why he is canceling the Koli match.

“A dark plague has corrupted my people and my village. Though many still stay at their work, and visit the bazaar, and play Koli, they have blinded themselves to the truth, and put strength and duty before fear.

“Huki, our greatest Koli champion, was one of the first to fall ill. He has become weakened, and cannot move from his bed. I fear that soon we will see in him the beginnings of the Madness, the same diabolical force that grips the wild Rahi when their masks become infected.”

If Huki is their greatest Koli champion, I wonder who then is Pohatu? I decide to ask.

“Pohatu is the Toa of the Po-Koro Matoran,” Onewa tells me. “His great strength can fell mountains, and the Kanohi Kakama gives him speed greater than any creature on Mata Nui.

“The irony is that Pohatu’s strength and speed cannot help us. An enemy that can neither be seen, nor felt plagues us.

“Vakama, of Ta-Koro, has sent some of his Guard to assist us, but they will not enter the village for fear of falling prey to this disease. Instead, they are combing the hills in search of Pohatu, who is on a grave quest for the Masks of Power. But without knowing even where this illness comes from, there is little anyone can do... even the great Pohatu.

“I am distracted by many of Po-Koro’s problems, adventurer, and I can give you little of my time. Do you think you can give me some clue about how to cure this illness?”

I cannot, so I tell Onewa goodbye.

“I wish you the speed of Pohatu, adventurer,” he says as I depart. He then returns to his sorrowful task of carving beds for the ill.

Curious, I head down to look at the Koli field. There I meet someone playing with a Koli ball. He greets me with a vigorous “Hup! Hup! Hup!”

“Are you here for a Koli match?” he asks. “I sure could use some more teammates to play with. All the others have gone home. They’re not feeling well. Not even Huki can play anymore. And I just got a new Comet! Traded two Husi for it.”

I would like to learn more about the game, so I ask, “What is Koli?”

“What is Koli?” he repeats incredulously. “You must not be from around here! Koli is the greatest sport on Mata Nui. It’s incredibly simple, but takes much more skill than the sports they play in other villages!



“Koli is played in a Koli field. You’re standing in the biggest one in Po-Wahi, but they don’t have to be as fancy as this. All you need is four goals, set up on each side of a square. There are four players.

“Each of the goals has a Matoran to guard it. To win, you have to kick Koli balls — like this one — into any of the other three goals, while at the same time stopping other players from getting their balls into your goal. That’s it!”

Remembering he has a new one, I ask, “What is a Comet?”

“A Comet is the best kind of Koli ball you can get,” he says. “Everyone is getting one of these now. They’re perfectly balanced, so it’s very hard to miss, and when you kick them, they fly as fast as a comet! They only started trading them recently at the bazaar. I don’t know where they get them, but whoever carved them is truly a master.”

Eager to learn more about him, I ask, “Who is Huki?”

“Who is Huki! Why, only the greatest Koli player, ever. At least... he was. He fell ill a little while ago, and I haven’t seen him around much. He lives just on the other side of the Koli field.”

Now that I know where Huki lives, I feel the pressing need to deliver the message that Maku is all right. Perhaps it will make him feel better somewhat. I say my goodbye to the stranger at the Koli field, but as I leave, I hear him:

“Hup! Hup! \*cough\*”

Is he too coming down with this mysterious illness? I see what must be Huki’s hut as I leave the Koli field. It is marked with an ‘X’ so all may know that the inhabitant within is sick. As I move toward the hut, I pass a lone spectator in the stands, still hopeful that the Koli match will go on.

I enter the hut and find Huki within. He is very ill, but shouts at me with great force: “Stay away from me!” And then he continues, much weaker now, “I just want to be left alone.”

Perhaps this is not Huki after all, I think. I decide that it is better to ask and be certain. “Who are you?”

“I am... Huki...” he replies. The words come with much difficulty.

“Why are you sick?” I ask.

“I don’t know...” he says with difficulty. “I have been here for — how many days? I’m not sure anymore... I used to know.

“You must go. I feel... strange. No one must come here, especially Maku. Do not tell her I am ill, it will worry her... she must not see me like this, she must not...”

Unable to take any more of this conversation, Huki yells “Get out!” I can do nothing more than oblige him.

I decide to check once more on the stranger on the Koli field, but I notice that he is gone. He has left behind his Comet! I resolve to find him and take it to him, but as I go to pick it up, a mysterious substance seems to ooze out from within it and coat the ball.

What can this mean? I decide to take the ball to Onewa to see if he knows. At first, he is puzzled.

“What? But this is just a Koli ball...

“Hm. But not just any Koli ball; this is the special kind that is being traded at the bazaar, and which has become very popular. Thank you, adventurer, for showing this to me. You are as noble as your reputation, and resourceful.

“This opens my eyes to many things. If these balls are the cause of the illness, then we must take them away from the village, and throw them in the sea. But they are very popular and the Po-Koro Matoran value Koli above many things. I cannot take these away from my people unless I have proof that they are the cause.

“However, this is a vital clue. I know that a merchant in the bazaar sells these balls — you must find out from him where these balls come from. But take care. If he is somehow involved in this plot, then he will not want you to find out.

“The evil that visited Ga-Koro across the waves has come, it seems, to our ocean of sand. I fear the shadow of the Makuta has been cast across Po-Koro. I know that the source of this evil must be found or all may be lost.

“If Vakama’s Guard can find the Toa, I will suggest to Pohatu that he seek you out, and together I hope you can do what is necessary. Would that the sick did not need me, or I would come to assist you on your quest.

“Perhaps there is some information that I can provide you with that will help you unravel this great mystery!” he asks me.

I can think of nothing more to ask Onewa, so I return to the Comet merchant in the marketplace. He is no more willing to tell me where he gets his Koli balls this time than when I asked before. But while he is busy with another customer, I notice a strange object among the Koli balls. I slip it into my bag without his noticing.

Not certain where I am going or what I am looking for, I decide to head back the way I came. I soon see Hafu, still hard at work on his latest masterpiece. I keep to the left and head toward what I think is a quarry.

The quarry is filled with enormous mask carvings. Below each mask is a small hole. Do I hold within my backpack the key to solving this mystery? There is only one way to find out. I place the object I “borrowed” from the Comet merchant into each hole, one by one, until I finally find the one for which it opens a door.

Inside the cave, I discover a pile of Comet Koli balls. They are all infected like the one I gave to Onewa. But I am not alone in the cave. A large, blue scorpion-like Rahi beast has spotted me.

Just then, a tall stranger appears in the cave with me. The scorpion takes aim and strikes him a blinding blow. He appears to be okay, except that he cannot see. He speaks to me.

“Adventurer, the scorpion has blinded me for the moment. It will be some time before my sight returns! Tell me where to kick the ball, and together we can destroy the Nui-Jaga’s nest!”

The stranger moves with astonishing speed. Although the Nui-Jaga knocks away several of our shots, we quickly begin breaking the green columns which constitute the Nui-Jaga’s nest. After the last strands have been snapped, the Nui-Jaga quickly retreats as the ceiling threatens to collapse upon us.

“Let’s get out of here,” says the stranger. We both turn to flee. I am running as fast as I can, but I can sense that I am not going to make it. The stranger begins to accelerate, and then suddenly we are far outside the cave, looking down upon it as a cloud of dust and stone comes shooting out of its mouth.

“Excellent, my friend!” the stranger exclaims. “We make a good team! My sight has returned to me. This was an evil plan, indeed. Onewa was right to call upon me. That was an infected mask set beside the Koli balls... But who left it there, and placed the balls beside it?”

“Though Po-Koro will be safe now, we have uncovered an even greater mystery. I fear the Makuta’s influence may extend beyond the Rahi, now...”

“I will take this news back to Po-Koro, and help them carry the infected Koli balls into the sea. My Mask of Power will let me to get to the village quick enough, I think, to save even Huki.

“You are a cunning ally, friend, and brave. I hope that we shall meet again, someday.”

And with that, he is gone. I can only conclude that I have encountered the Toa known as Pohatu. I return to Po-Koro as fast as my legs will carry me. I seek out Onewa to tell him what has happened.

“Hail, hero!” cries Onewa. “Pohatu has already been here, and gone. The infected Koli balls have been taken to the sea, and they will bother us no more. The Matoran of my village are recovering from their illness. I’m not certain what became of the merchant who sold those Koli balls, however. He disappeared before Pohatu returned.

“Pohatu has told me of all your adventures. We, like the Ga-Koro Matoran, will long honor your deeds! Nokama was right when she said you would be witness to many important things transpiring throughout our land. She asked me to watch you, and tell her if I also feel this.

“I know now that you are the one her astrologer has spoken of. Take this Carving Tool, which is the proud symbol of our greatest Carvers. Show it to Nokama and she will give you the Book of Chronicles.

“I trust your travels are going well. I wish you the speed of Pohatu, adventurer.”

Before heading back to Ga-Koro, I decide to check on Huki’s progress. The Koli field is now full of Koli players, and fans are crowded round shouting cheers of support.

At Huki’s hut, Huki is now up and about, seemingly bursting with energy.

“I will soon be fit enough to return to Koli, and to Maku,” he tells me. “If you see her in your travels, tell her I am well!”

I agree to do so and immediately head out to do just that.

## “Call Me ‘Chronicler’”

“Hello again,” Nokama greets me. I show her the Po-Koro chisel.

She gets straight to the point. “Take this book, and attend to it, and travel to the villages. It will store all that you see. If the Toa fail, and Mata Nui is destroyed... this, at least, will remain. And the ocean will keep it safe for us.”

Honored by this task, I say goodbye and turn to leave when she says it: “Good luck, Chronicler.” Chronicler. I now have some identity and purpose to cling to at last.

Not exactly knowing how I am to travel to the villages, nor how many villages there may be, I decide to head back to Po-Wahi by boat. Once there, I plan to head toward the mountain along the stone path I have not yet taken.

## “Onu-Koro”

The path to Onu-Koro is uneventful. The sands of Po-Wahi slowly give way to the rocks of the mountain. Eventually, I reach the entrance to a tunnel. Two large crab-like creatures are here along with their attendant. He speaks to me.

“Howdy, Traveler. Need a Crab to Onu-Koro? Awful dark in there, but Puku knows the way. I heard there’s another Ussal race coming up. Make sure you catch it if you’re in town.”

“What race?” I ask.

“The Ussal Crabs are strong and loyal,” he begins. “They help us with many things here, from mining to transportation, but mostly racing. I’m usually at the track, but with all the problems these days, there isn’t much time for it.”

“Who is Puku?” I inquire.

“Puku’s a retired racing crab, used to belong to none other than Onepu himself. Took the title three times with him. She’s a bit long in the tooth now, but still fast!”

“What is Onu-Koro?” I wonder aloud.

“Onu-Koro is the great undercity of Onu-Wahi, where the mines sink as deep as Mount Ihu is tall! The wise Whenua rules here.”

Having promised to visit the villages, I resolve to press on to Onu-Koro. A fast companion who knows the way seems like a very good idea to me, even if it is an Ussal Crab, so I quickly befriend Puku and we are off down the long, dark tunnel.

We reach the city quickly. Puku is indeed still fast. There are many huts here in the darkness, lit only by the occasional torch or candle. A guard is posted here at the entrance. He has a large disk strapped to his back. I decide to seek out Whenua.

The first hut I encounter seems to house more Ussal Crabs. Someone is tending to them. “You there! Fetch those saddles!” he shouts to me. “And we need more Discs. Step to it!”

“Try to stay out of the way, Traveler. We’re organizing a patrol. With all the lights out in Onu-Koro, the Rahi have stepped up their raids.

“Take care when traveling in the deep mines and tunnels—the Kofo-Jaga can appear at any time. Battling them takes special skill.”

“Who are you?” I ask.

“Onepu, at your service,” he replies. “I am the Captain of the famous Onu-Koronan Ussalry Regiment, Champion of Ussal Racing, and Special Aide of Whenua, our great Turaga.”

I ask him, “What are Kofo-Jaga?”

“They are small creatures,” he begins, “but incredibly fierce and cunning... they attack by surprise, and always in large numbers. They shun bright light and use darkness and fear as weapons.

“Their nests are scattered throughout the Underworld, and woe betide the miner who breaks through to one! Usually, Whenua uses his special drill to detect these nests before they are opened, but he has been busy and the miners have been desperate to find more protodermis veins.”

Worried, I inquire, “How do I battle the Kofo-Jaga?”

“The Regiment depends on its gallant steeds, and a healthy supply of Discs, when fighting the Kofo-Jaga,” Onepu replies. “The darkness gives the Makuta’s minions strength. It’s good to have a Lightstone with you, if you can find one.”

I thank Onepu for his help and then I tell him goodbye.

“May your Crab ride swift and true!” he says as I exit.

I wander among the huts, wondering which one belongs to Whenua. Finally, I come across a large hut with a shrine in front of it that reminds me of the one I saw in Ta-Koro. Perhaps Whenua is here. I begin to enter the hut, but I discover that there is a meeting taking place within it.

“Turaga,” begins the purple fellow with the large disk strapped to his back, “the mining guilds have hit an underground rock layer that they cannot break through. We fear the protodermis will run out if we cannot continue our digging!”

“How far does it run?” asks the one with the staff that looks like a drill. This must be Whenua speaking.

“Shaft 3 and Shaft 8 have ceased protodermis mining because they cannot break through this rock layer.”

“That’s the entire mining area!” Whenua exclaims.

“Yes, Turaga,” the purple fellow replies. “For all we know, the strata extends beneath all of Mata Nui, except perhaps the Mangai volcano.”

“Are you certain there is no soft spot to dig through, Captain?” asks Whenua.

“We’ve been over every inch of the surface,” replies the Captain. “There are no fractures, no fault lines, nothing!”

Whenua inquires, “How much remains of the surface deposits?”

The Captain looks down at his feet. “They are running out. We may have to look elsewhere for more protodermis. Like Ta-Wahi, or Po-Wahi.”

“What is this layer made out of?” asks Whenua.

“Our prospectors believe it to be rock, but it has higher organic levels than any mineral composite we’ve seen.”

“Organic?” Whenua seems surprised.

“Yes,” the Captain affirms. “It seems to have more in common with an Ussal Crab shell than any normal stone strata.”

“Strange. I wonder what we will find if we break through?” wonders Whenua.

The Captain seems eager to press his point. “Turaga, I must have more men and more machines if we are to know. You must allocate more resources to the mining guilds!”

“Captain, I am doing everything I can,” replies Whenua. “No one wants to see the protodermis run out. But Onu-Koro has many problems right now.”

As if to support Whenua’s statement, one of the other attendees volunteers one of those many problems. “Without a fresh supply of Lightstones, we cannot light the digging site.”

“Have you been able to continue the tunneling at all?” Whenua asks.

“Yes, but we are working at about 25 percent capacity. It is too dark down there to work safely!” complains the miner.

“The Le-Koro Highway must be completed soon,” Whenua insists. “We need safe passage between the villages.”

“Turaga, we cannot ask our workers to continue under these conditions!” exclaims the worker.

“Taipu says he can dig by torchlight, without difficulty,” states Whenua.

“Taipu is very stubborn, and strong,” says the miner. “But he is slow even when he has a team of diggers to help him. One Matoran cannot dig a tunnel to Le-Koro!”



“Foreman,” says Whenua resignedly, “until we can repair the flood damage, there is little I can do.”

“You can give us more Matoran, and more equipment!” pleads the Foreman. “The Guilds and the Traders have extra. We can use those!”

“They do not have extra,” Whenua corrects. “And how would it help if they did?”

“The air is bad because of the torches, and the Rahi attack frequently because of the darkness,” states the Foreman. “If we had more workers, we could alternate teams before they get ill. We could put more guards on duty.”

“Foreman, I understand the problems you are facing,” Whenua commiserates. “I am doing everything in my power to get you the help you need. But you must be patient.”

But a lack of patience is on view everywhere. The third attendee facing Whenua speaks. “Turaga Whenua, I will not tolerate this kind of delay! The Trade Guilds have contracts with four of Po-Koro’s most influential artists.”

“I understand that,” says Whenua, “and I am doing everything I can.”

“Protodermis production is stopped,” complains the tradesman. “Stonemasons are slowed by the darkness. And half the shipments were lost to Rahi attacks!”

“Ta-Koronan torches are being used to light the stone quarries now,” Whenua explains. “Those deliveries will be made.”

“The Kofo-Jaga are not afraid of torchlight,” the tradesman insists. “And what of the protodermis? The Po-Koronans cannot trade stone for nothing!”

Whenua continues, “The Mine Captains are working to break through this rock layer. Until then there is little we can do.”

“They make goods from the protodermis. Without it they cannot trade for stone! We will lose that market.” The tradesman is clearly concerned.

Whenua is less so. “There are other markets,” he says.

The tradesman presses on. “And what of the Le-Koro highway? It was to be finished months ago. My caravans refuse to travel to the south until it is complete!”

“The Le-Koronans will have to come trade at our market until it is finished,” offers Whenua.

“They try, Turaga!” exclaims the tradesman. He is now quite agitated. “But they can no more come north than we can go south!”

“Perhaps the sea is a better route,” ponders Whenua.

“There are even more dangerous Rahi in the waters than on land!” the tradesman complains. “What of Onua? Is he doing nothing to help Onu-Koro?”

“Onua did not descend from the heavens to help your profits, Guildmaster.” It is Whenua who is agitated now. “He is pursuing a great quest that may yet save us all.”

The Guildmaster will not be dissuaded. “I demand that more attention be paid to the needs of the Trade Guilds! The Great Market is Onu-Koro’s most valuable asset!”

“Guildmaster,” begins Whenua wearily, “I will speak with Onepu. Perhaps he can spare an escort for your caravans until the Highway is complete.”

Whenua clearly has no time for me, and I have no more time to listen to the many complaints of the people of Onu-Koro. I decide that perhaps I had best be going.

Beyond Whenua’s hut is another tunnel. Outside the tunnel is a map with symbols upon it. Among the fire and wavy lines, I see what looks like a Lightstone. It is very dark here in Onu-Koro. I wonder if perhaps I might find a Lightstone brighter than my own. I head into the tunnel to do just that.

The tunnel is very dark, even with my Lightstone held out in front of me. I inch forward in the darkness cautiously. Finally, I see a light up ahead. It is a Lightstone marking the fork in the tunnel. Recalling the map, I decide to follow the left path.

Two flickering torches mark the entrance to the Lightstones mine. I wander in a ways until I meet up with some of the miners. There appears to have been some sort of disaster here. There is lava flowing everywhere out of the pipes and onto the floor.

The miner to my right, who is holding a large key, speaks to me. “Better steer clear of this area, traveler. There’s a runaway lava flow that burst from Ta-Koro. No way to get to the Lightstone mines until it’s rerouted.”

“We lost a bunch of drilling equipment when that flow burst,” says the miner to my left. “It’s all stuck on the other side of the firelake! If only we could get across!”

*I can get across, I think to myself. But then I wonder why I think that. And then I remember: the Lava surfboard! I must know how to surf across the lava if I have a lava surfboard, I tell myself. Right?*

There is only one way to find out. Before I can change my mind, I take the surfboard out of my backpack, throw it down into the lava, and making a running jump for it.

It is an exhilarating ride as I glide across the top of the lava. Fortunately, just when I think all of the momentum has just about left my surfboard, I arrive at the other side of the lava pool.

There is a pump here, but it clearly is not working. I take a closer look. Only a few of the buttons are lit up. I need to somehow get all of the buttons to light. I begin pressing a few buttons to see what happens. After a few presses, I have it figured out. In no time at all, all of the buttons are lit and the pump springs to life.

As the lava starts flowing through the pump, the valves on the leaking pipes begin to close until no more lava is flowing into the hallway. Soon, the lava has receded and the miner with the key has arrived and re-opened the Lightstone mine. I go in to take a look.

It is a room unlike any I have ever seen. A million stars light up the night sky, only the sky is made of rock and the stars are made of glowing stone. A prospector is surveying the room while the miners are hard at work.

“Great work, stranger!” says the prospector. “There’s a lot of folks in Onu-Koro who will be glad you found a way to the Lightstones. The Lightstone deposits in this cave will keep Onu-Koro lit for a long time. Pretty sure they’ll keep the Rahi back, too.”

Pleased with myself, I head back to a now much-brighter Onu-Koro. The miners have very quickly taken Lightstones from the mine and distributed them among the village and tunnels. I decide to head into the Great Mine, to see what troubles might persist there.

The tunnel is long and dark. I am amazed at the amount of work that has gone into making this mine. Where only a few idle Ussal Crabs and abandoned equipment had been before, all is now abuzz with activity, thanks to the Lightstones. At the end of the tunnel, I see someone surveying the mine near an elevator shaft. He notices me.

“Who are you?” I ask.

“I’m the Chief Prospector for Mine Shaft 8,” he replies. “We dig for protodermis and stone here.”

“Have you brought word from Whenua?” asks the prospector. “Has he figured out how to get through this rock layer?”

“What rock layer?” I ask.

“At the bottom of Shaft B; the elevator goes down there,” he replies. “Onu-Koro’s had real problems since we hit this strata. Can’t dig through it or blast it. Not even Onua could claw through it; it’s just too strong.

“The Mining Captains have been trying to get Whenua to give us more workers and machines,” he continues. “If we don’t find a way through this rock, there won’t be any more protoderms.”

Not eager to relive the heated discussion in Whenua’s hut, I merely say that there is no word yet from Whenua. The prospector does not seem surprised.

“Look out for Rahi in the tunnels! It’s dark down here!” he warns me. “Take care when traveling in the deep mines and tunnels; the Kofo-Jagas can appear at any time. Battling them takes special skill.”

I thank him and say goodbye. I resolve to ride the elevator down to the bottom of Shaft B and take a look for myself at this mysteriously impenetrable rock layer.

The elevator has but one control. I grab the lever and pull it down. My descent begins. The ride is uneventful, but I did not realize just how deep this shaft goes. At the bottom, I step out of the elevator and see someone pondering the ground in the distance.

I move closer. This must be the layer everyone is talking about. All about it are broken and shattered tools.

“That strange disk on the ground is the only feature this rock layer has. I’m not sure what it is,” says the miner, half to himself and half to me. “They look like astrological symbols... if I knew an astrologer, I’d sure have a few questions for him! Hey, do you know any Astrologers by any chance?”

“Who are you?” I ask.

“I’m a prospector for the Mining Guild,” he says. “We’re trying to figure out how to get through this rock layer and mine more protoderms and stone.”

“This strange disk?” I ask.

“Yes, the one on the ground over there,” he replies. “It’s covered with strange symbols. We have no idea how it came to be here, buried so far underground, and sunk into this hard rock. It’s very mysterious.”

“I know an astrologer!” I finally admit.

“You do? Great!” the prospector exclaims. “Take this message and deliver it. I’ve sketched out this disk. Maybe your friend can figure out if it means anything important.”

With the prospector's letter to the astrologer in my backpack, I begin the elevator ride back up the shaft. I only realize just how far I have come when I make the long journey back to the astrologer in Ga-Koro.

"Strange..." she says. "A prospector found this in Onu-Koro? Underground? Who would build a sundial underground? Perhaps there was an earthquake, and it fell beneath the earth..."

"Yes, this is an ancient sundial, used many ages ago. I am certain that its purpose has been completely forgotten. The strange thing about it is that it has an indicator at four o'clock. No other sundials have this marking. I have always been curious as to why.

"Take this gnomon and see if it fits in the center of the sundial. You see, I found it in the foothills of Mount Ihu a long time ago, and since then have been looking for the sundial to which it belongs. You may have found it for me!

"If it is in a cave, then we may not ever find out what happened every day at four. Unless you have some way to fake sunlight underground!"

I take the gnomon and place it into my backpack. As I ride the boat, walk the paths, ride Puku the Ussal Crab, walk the dark tunnels, and ride the elevator down to the prospector, I can only hope that he and the astrologer have no more items to exchange.

"So it's a sundial after all," says the prospector. "Very odd! Who would put a sundial underground!? Well, the astrologer said something's supposed to happen at four o'clock each day. Maybe if you can fake sunlight somehow, we can find out what!

"We can't dig it, we can't drill it, we can't blow it up... How do we get through?!"

I take a closer look at the sundial. After traveling all the way from Ga-Koro, I have almost forgotten why I have come back: the gnomon! I take it out of my backpack and place it on the sundial.

As I stare at the sundial, I suddenly have an idea. I take out my Lightstone and cast its light upon the gnomon such that its shadow falls upon what I believe to be the number four. At first, I don't think it is going to work, but then the dial begins to glow. Soon, the sundial has disappeared and a spiral staircase further down into the depths appears in its place.

"Looks like we had the right idea, stranger," says the prospector. "That disk was a passage through the rock after all!"

I head cautiously down the spiral stairs. At the bottom, I am amazed to see a gold mask floating in the air above a stone column. I am unable to touch it or do anything with it. As there is nothing else down here, I reluctantly head back up the stairs.

I decide to drop in on Whenua before I leave Onu-Koro to look for other villages. When I reach his hut, the others who were there previously have gone.

“Thank you, adventurer, for helping with so many of Onu-Koro’s problems!” says Whenua gratefully. “I thought the guild masters would never leave me alone! Now that I have some peace, is there anything you would ask of me?”

Just to make certain I know who I am talking to, I ask “Who are you?”

“I am Whenua, Turaga of Onu-Koro,” he replies. “It is my job to keep things running smoothly around here. A hard task in these difficult times.”

“What is Onu-Koro?” I ponder aloud, to see what Whenua thinks of his village.

“Onu-Koro is the wondrous under-city of Mata Nui,” Whenua beams. “Matoran come from near and far to trade at our great Market, and marvel at the work of our engineers. Stone dug from our quarries fuels the creations of Po-Korongan carvers. Protodermis, the stuff of life, is brought from deposits within the earth and traded amongst the Matoran. We also mine Lightstones, and many other precious resources.”

Not having anything else to ask, I say goodbye to Whenua.

“Good luck in your travels, adventurer,” says Whenua as I leave. “May Onua protect you.”

I remember the name from when Whenua was speaking with the guild masters. I ask him, “Who is Onua?”

“Onua is the Toa of our village. He is a great hero, engaged on a quest to find the Masks of Power, which he will need to defeat the Makuta...”

I thank Whenua and set off for the tunnel beyond his hut. I am determined to follow the path of the three wavy lines.

## “Le-Koro”

I follow the tunnel along the path of the three wavy lines. I discover that it is not yet complete. There are miners here hard at work. I speak to the one I believe to be Taipu, of whom Whenua spoke earlier.

“Onepu told me you found a way to the lightstones,” Taipu says. “Thank you, adventurer. We can dig much more quickly now. I am sure the highway will reach Le-Koro soon!” Then he adds, “If the Rahi attack the site, traveler, stay near me. I will protect you.”

“Why are you digging?” I ask.

“We are building a highway to the village of Le-Koro. Whenua says I am the strongest of the Onu-Koronan Matoran, so I am leading the way.”

“What is Le-Koro?” I wonder aloud.

“It is a village in the south, where the Le-Koronan Matoran live in trees. I have never been there. Onepu says there are tall, pretty forests, and huts built in the sky! Onepu says the Le-Koronans are great musicians, too, and play music all day long from the treetops.”

I have met Onepu already, but I wonder what Taipu thinks of him, so I ask, “Who is Onepu?”

“Onepu is my best friend in all of Onu-Koro. He is very smart and knows a lot about Ussal Crab racing and fighting Rahi. He is supposed to be digging, too, but he showed me how I can do both of our digging at the same time. *That’s* how smart he is!”

And with that, he takes another swing at the rock in front of him. Suddenly, light shines through where once was rock. The tunnel appears to be complete.

“We did it! We’ve made it through!” exclaims Taipu. “Onepu was right. It is so beautiful here. Whenua said I should make camp when we break through, but I want to go to see Le-Koro and the tree-Matoran...”

“Le-Koro is right through those trees, I bet. Won’t you take me with you to see it?”

I see no reason not to do so. After all, Taipu was willing to protect me in the tunnel. The others can make camp. “Yes, I will take you, Taipu,” I reply.

“Thank you! I bet it is more beautiful even than the Great Mine! Let’s go!”

Taipu is so excited; he is practically dancing as he runs ahead of me into the trees. He occasionally stops and looks around as he waits for me to catch up. "I wonder where the people of Le-Koro are?" he asks during one such stop.

And then, during another stop, he motions excitedly from atop a rock. "It's here! Le-Koro! I've found it! It's beautiful!" he shouts. No sooner have the words escaped his mouth than a large creature swoops down from the treetops, picks up Taipu, and flies away with him! *Oh no! What have I done!?*

I rush ahead. Perhaps the inhabitants of Le-Koro can help me save Taipu. But where is Le-Koro? All I see is a large tree in a swamp.

But a closer look at the base of the tree reveals what appears to be some sort of elevator, carved out of large pods and attached to long vines. I climb in the nearest pod. The controls resemble the three wavy lines I saw on the map back in Onu-Koro. A few presses of the buttons, and I am soon ascending up into the high branches of the tree.

As I step out of the elevator, I am amazed to discover an entire village in the treetops. But all of the huts appear to have been closed up and abandoned. Where are the inhabitants? Who will help me save Taipu? I decide to search the village to see if there is anyone, or anything, here to help me.

I don't go far before I discover an abandoned flute outside one of the huts. I pick it up. At first, I place it into my backpack and continue my search. But later, I decide to take it out again and examine it more closely.

I press a large, blue key. As I do so, the other keys of the flute light up in sequence. I decide to try my hand at playing the flute using the same sequence of keys. When I do, a short, hauntingly beautiful melody issues forth.

Before the last note has died away, the village suddenly springs to life. Windows pop open and inhabitants peek out. Other villagers appear from higher up in the trees. They eagerly jump down to greet me, some more skillfully than others. One begins to speak to me.

"Forgive but village attacked by Makuta's evil beasts! Feared you were Rahi but no Rama plays Flute like that, so downtree we come and greet!"

"What attack?" I ask.

"In last rainfall Kongu on patrol saw Rama-hive growing topleaf-high, far in dark forest. Lateknowing Matoran, Rama infected by Makuta! One drift ago, cloudsneaking Nui-Rama fly on



Le-Koro to destroy all. Quicksoaring Kahu-riders treelaunch, and great battles fought! Village still stands, but many lost!”

“What is a Rama?” I wonder aloud.

“Nui-Rama, buzzflying Rahi!” he answers. “Hundred-eye, allseeing, fright and fury! Makuta-Madness makes even worse! Wings mash, pincers grab! No chance for Matoran alone, only Toa bold enough to stand against it, yet cunning Rama sneak-swoop-smash and fly out of reach!”

“Who are you?” I inquire.

“Tamaru of Le-Koro!” he replies. “Highfly Vinesman, deepwood Wayfinder! Chief Kahu-tamer! Matau’s best! You are the brave wanderer that some speak of! Braver still, for coming to Le-Koro!”

I am a little embarrassed that my reputation precedes me, especially since it is fear of the Nui-Rama and what has happened to Taipu that has brought me here, not bravery.

“Traveler beware — darktime come,” interrupts the villager next to Tamaru. Matau stolen, Lewa gone! Le-Koronans prepare for battleflight!”

“Who are you?” I ask.

“Kongu, fastest Leaf-Runner!” he replies. “Everquick pilot! Weaver, mapmaker! Le-Koro Matoran!”

“And who is Matau?” I continue.

“Matau the Singer!” replies Kongu. “Down talk, up singing! Friend and laughter! In lifedawn years past, was known Matau Kewa Champion! Matau, great Turaga of Le-Koro and soul of the forest people! Gone! Gone! Taken by Makuta’s Rahi!”

The villagers here speak in an odd manner, but I think that I understand what they mean. “Who is Lewa?” I press on.

“Lewa, great Toa of Air!” says Kongu. “Hero of Le-Koro! Gone away in quest for the Great Kanohi. If he were here, he would save us, for he has faced greater dangers than this, and survived!

“Are you here to help in the defense, traveler? Le-Koro needs brave windriders to face the Rama!” Kongu asks me.

I am not certain. Kongu senses my hesitation.

“Uptree battle, downtree peace! You choose, but if Rama come, try to stay under cover!” says Kongu.

“The forest can protect you, traveler, if you heed it!” adds Tamaru.

I know I can’t save Taipu by heading back down. Perhaps if I help the villagers, then they can help me retrieve Taipu. I have no other options. I head “uptree”. As I do so, I notice a dark cloud growing in the distance.

“Rama-swarm! Scramble!” someone shouts.

Large birds appear, the villagers mount them, and then they fly off into the sky toward the dark cloud of Rama. Kongu mounts a bird close by and motions for me to come over.

“Traveler, will you be my second?” Kongu asks me when I arrive. “My Kahu stays treebound without a Disc-thrower!”

I immediately agree and mount the Kahu bird.

“I hope your Disc-arm is as great as your nerve!” says Kongu. “Lewa protect us! Let’s go!” And with that, we are off into the skies to face the Rama swarm.

There is chatter among the pilots as we race toward our foe. “Stay with your wingman!” one shouts. “May the wind be ever underneath your wings!” shouts another. And then we are there.

Rama after Rama comes at us, eager to swat us out of the sky. I launch my discs as fast and as hard as I can, aiming carefully to knock the Rama down. I get many. Others retreat.

Kongu flies like a determined madman. First we are up in the clouds. Then we dive down into the trees. Yet the Rama still come.

Emboldened by our successes, Kongu pushes on to take the fight to the Rama. What at first appears to be a small mountain in the distance soon becomes clearer. It is the Rama hive. Incredibly, Kongu takes us into its very mouth!

We fight valiantly, and as best we can, but there are too many of them. Soon, our Kahu is injured. How Kongu guides the bird to a landing, I will never know. But we arrive safely. At least, as safely as one can arrive in the hive of a swarm of Nui-Rama!

There are other villagers here. And I think I see Taipu hard at work nearby! All are watched closely by small electric blue bugs. Kongu speaks with the tallest of the prisoners. I move closer, and the tall prisoner speaks to me.

“It is an honor that you sought to save me, traveler, but I am sorry that you made the attempt. But with song we will know hope, and hope brings freedom! Keep your voice down, traveler, and sing as you work. And hope Lewa comes to save us.”

“Who are you?” I ask.

“I am Matau, called the Singer by the people of Le-Koro,” he replies. “I am their Turaga. I have been imprisoned here since leafdawn.”

“Will Lewa come to save us?” I inquire.

“You are not of this tribe, so I will tell you of Lewa, but you must swear not to reveal what I am about to say to anyone. Lewa is here. But he will not save us.

“The great Toa is the same in body, in strength, and in speed. But his mind is gone. He has been attacked by the Makuta and enslaved by evil. His Great Mask of Power has been replaced with an infected mask, and the only way to bring him back is to take it off. And I know of nothing with the strength to overcome him.

“He has become more fearsome and horrible than any Rahi. We shall never escape this place. All that is left to us is song, and what small comfort it brings.

“Take care, and do your work without resistance. Nui-Rama are not clever, but they see much. They know when we are plotting.”

I am about to begin my work when I see him. He is just a point, high up the walls of the hive. But then he comes closer, accompanied by his Nui-Rama handler. I know instantly from his infected mask that this must be the once-great Toa Lewa.

Everything about him seems dark. I can see within the claws of the Nui-Rama beside him what must have been Lewa’s original mask. The shock among the prisoners at this sight is palpable.

Suddenly, another tall stranger springs from the very ground beneath our feet. It is instantly clear that Lewa and the stranger are set upon destroying each other. Lewa raises his battle axe and charges at the stranger.

The mask of the stranger changes shape and appears to power up. Lewa’s attack is thwarted by some sort of shield emanating from the mask. Lewa is thrown backwards into the wall of the hive. The jolt appears to have changed him.

“What... what’s happening to me?” he asks himself. “My body... not my own...” he mumbles. “My mind... get out of *my mind!*” he screams. And then the darkness returns to him.

Lewa and the stranger begin to battle again. The fight moves quickly all over the hive. Lewa scores a frightening blow, and the stranger is knocked partially into the wall of the hive. As one of the electric blue bugs crawls out to survey the damage, the stranger's mask changes once again.

Small bits and pieces of debris suddenly float up into the air around the stranger. And then, the electric blue bug joins the floating cloud of debris. Before Lewa realizes what is happening, the cloud is hurtling toward him, bug and all. Lewa tries to react, but the bug strikes him a blow to the head, knocking the infected mask off of his face and onto the floor.

"His mask! Get his mask!" exclaims Matau.

The stranger looks to the Nui-Rama that is hovering nearby. The beast can no longer hold onto Lewa's uninfected mask. Instead, the mask floats down to the seemingly confused Lewa, who puts it on.

Instantly, a change comes over the Toa. He leaps high into the air and onto the back of the Nui-Rama. It is Lewa's mask that changes now. As it does, the Nui-Rama ceases its struggling. The beast appears to be fully under Lewa's control.

Victorious, Lewa and the tall stranger, who must be Toa Onua of Onu-Koro, collect the prisoners and we all escape the hive aboard the Nui-Rama and our faithful Kahu bird, now nursed back to health. There is to be much rejoicing back at Le-Koro with the return of the prisoners and, especially, Matau.

But before the festivities begin, Lewa approaches the shrine of Le-Koro. It opens up, and he descends into it. When he returns, his mask has changed from green to gold. It is yet one more reason to celebrate in Le-Koro! Even Taipu is dancing!

"Traveler, it is good to see you again after all our adventures!" Matau says to me. "Return to treebright Le-Koro was so long hoped for in the darkwet Rama Hive! Take this Flutesong; it fits in the Flute you found. Whenever you need help from sunsoaring Le-Koro, playsong and you will have it!"

"What of Lewa and the Golden Kanohi?" I ask.

"By bringing all the Great Masks of Power to the Suva, it has given to Lewa a Golden Kanohi," Matau replies. "Some legends say that after the Golden Kanohi are found, there will come the Toa Kaita — but I do not know what this is."

As much as I enjoy a good party, I feel that perhaps I need to keep moving on. I tell Matau goodbye.

*Mata Nui: The Online Game*

By Mark Durham

“Many thanks to you, adventurer, for helping us to highbranch home!” he says as I leave.  
“Goodbye, traveler, and fare well!”

## “Ko-Koro”

As I re-enter the tunnel and observe the workers as they widen the entrance, I think back to Jala, Captain of the Guard at Ta-Koro. What was it that he had said about the North March? Perhaps I can be of some assistance there. I follow the tunnel to Ta-Koro and seek out the Captain.

When I find him, my instincts are confirmed. “Stranger, have you heard?” he asks when I greet him. “We’re falling back. And the Toa have completely disappeared.”

“My scouts delivered reports from the other villages today. The news is not good. The Rahi are closing on all sides, and their numbers are too great to count. After the fall of Tren Krom, I completely lost contact with the North March.”

“But we will not go quietly into the shadow of Makuta, as long as the light and heat of the great Mangai still blazes! I know of one maneuver that none will expect. I only hope Vakama and the others will listen.”

“What news from the other villages?” I ask.

“You, at least, have seen some small victories, but Makuta’s evil infection is still spreading throughout Mata Nui,” Jala says. “The other villages are holding on while they can. Onepu is so hard pressed; he can’t spare me even one Ussalry regiment! Not a single regiment!”

“What maneuver?” I query.

“It is imperative that the villages build fortifications and prepare for a final defense,” Jala confides in me. “I expect many Rahi to threaten the villages very soon.”

“Vakama says the Toa are gathering at the Kini-Nui, at the center of the island. We must try to protect them while they fulfill their mission. The Turaga must each send heroes to help the Toa at Kini-Nui. The Makuta will not expect it.

“I must know what happened to North March,” Jala broods. “I have no warriors to spare, and you have proven resourceful and true. So I ask you: will you join the Guard?”

“I will join the Guard,” I reply. “What do you need me to do?”

“It warms me that you have chosen to accept our trust,” begins Jala. “Vakama will be pleased.”

“The North March is an icy pass where Ta-Wahi meets Ko-Wahi. The Ko-Koronans have been seen little during the past months, and heard from even less. But it may not be that they are troubled; silence has always been their way.

“The Guard has a small outpost there, only reachable by cablecar. They watch against Rahi from the frozen heights. They also keep watch on Ko-Koronans.

“I fear the servants of Makuta have taken all my scouts. Take this Ensign and show it to the sentry at the cablecar. He will let you through. Then, make contact with our scouts in North March and get a report for me on the Makuta’s efforts in the mountains. Good luck, traveler.”

I bid Jala goodbye and head out for the perimeter of Ta-Koro. I ascend the many steps along the outer wall until I meet the sentry.

“Only guards may pass,” he tells me.

I show him my ensign. “You may pass,” he says. Ta-Koro guards are not exactly known for their stimulating conversation.

I climb onto the cablecar and it whisks me up the mountain. It is quite a contrast in temperature as I move from the fiery lava of Ta-Koro to the snowy clime of Ko-Wahi.

At the top of the cablecar run, I discover a small hut. It appears to be an abandoned outpost. Within the hut is a Heatstone. I feel foolish for not having thought to bring one myself. I pick it up and place it in my backpack.

Outside the hut, there are footprints in the snow leading up the mountain. Having no other directions to Ko-Koro, I decide to follow them through the drifts.

I soon come across an astonishing sight. Some poor villager has been encased in ice! Perhaps I am not too late. I take out the Heatstone to see if I can melt the villager out of the ice.

The villager quickly revives. He is startled to see me, and he runs away. I follow him. He appears trapped at the base of a large drift when suddenly a door opens revealing an icy tunnel. He disappears down the tunnel and I follow him once more.

Safely within the confines of the tunnel, the villager sees no need to continue to run away. He is examining himself in the reflection on the ice as I approach him. “Who are you?” I ask.

“Kopeke,” he answers.

Mindful of the task Jala has sent me on, I get straight to the point. “What happened to the Ta-Koronan Guard?”

“The Makuta led them into the ice, and I fear they will not return,” Kopeke answers. “Had you not come and saved me, I would be facing a similar fate.”

“Where am I?” I ask.

"I do not wish to be questioned," says Kopeke. "If you seek answers, do so in Ko-Koro. There you will find meditation and contemplation. It is Turaga Nuju's way to think on all things, and from his Sanctum on Ihu's peak one can see far ahead and far behind.

"In Ko-Koro, we respect knowledge above all things. You must have great knowledge even to step foot within it. You are the one who seeks to chronicle this era, and so you will doubtless travel the icy drifts in search of answers. But true sight reveals many things, and knowing the future can be dangerous. That is your choice.

"Wisdom is ever the burden of the Turaga. I do not expect it from you."

Kopeke returns to looking at the icy reflections on the wall. I discover that he is not looking at himself. Rather, from his vantage point he can see both the cablecar and the hut. Perhaps he is a sentry, guarding this tunnel entrance.

I appear free to continue on to Ko-Koro, so I continue to head farther into the tunnel. My progress is soon stopped however when I come to a locked gate.

The lock appears to be controlled by the carved blocks of ice scattered about me on the floor. Each block displays an image of a mask. I recognize a few: Toa Lewa's mask, Turaga Matau's mask, and Toa Pohatu's mask. I also note the symbols at the bottom of each column.

I am clearly supposed to place the icy blocks into the slots of the columns. At first, I am not certain which blocks go where. But very soon I have figured it out and the gate opens up to reveal the steps beyond. I continue on my way to Ko-Koro.

The path is precarious, what with all of the ice and snow and blowing wind. I am not alone out here however. Two guards stand duty outside the main entrance. They shake off their drifts of snow as they greet me.

I enter what appears to be the main building of Ko-Koro. There is a large pot over a fire in the center. A large mask overlooks the well-lit room. There are several villagers here. They appear to be studying the writing on the wall. I interrupt the villager nearest to me.

"Welcome, traveler, to the Sanctum," he says. "You may join us in our meditation if you wish. Nuju honors all wise Matoran that they may join in the Seeking. If you wish to speak with our Turaga, you must wait for Matoro to return. He is the only one that can translate Nuju's wisdom. Is there anything you wish to know?"

"What is the Seeking?" I ask.

"Written upon these walls and tablets are the great Prophecies," he tells me. "To understand even a fraction of what they speak takes years of meditation and patient decryption."



I don't have years. I need answers now. I press on. "Who is Nuju?"

"Nuju is the Turaga of Ko-Koro. His mediations reach into the past and into the future, and he has deciphered much of the ancient Prophecies. He has Visions.

"He does very little that is not significant in some way to the future of Mata Nui, and the Kanohi Matatu gives him the power to move objects by sheer force of will."

Perhaps Nuju can give me the answers I seek. But this fellow says I need Matoro to speak to him. "Where is Matoro?" I ask.

"Matoro is alone, hunting Rahi in the Drifts," he replies. "You may seek him if you wish, but be warned: Ihu is not merciful, even to the Ko-Koronan."

Suddenly, part of the wall gives way and another icy tunnel appears.

"Take this passageway to enter into the Drifts. Matoro often leaves behind signal flags so that he does not get lost. If you follow them you may come to him."

I thank the villager and head once more down an icy tunnel. When I arrive at the other end, I discover one of Matoro's signal flags and his footprints in the snow. I follow them as the snow begins to fall heavily.

Soon, I am headed up the slippery, snow-covered slopes of Mount Ihu, following Matoro's trail of red signal flags. Although cold and windy with falling snow, the path is not too difficult to follow at first.

Then suddenly, it strikes. A blinding whiteout of a blizzard! I can hardly see my own hand in front of my face. Everywhere I turn, I can only see the white of the blowing snowstorm. Reluctantly, I press on in the hopes of finding Matoro.

I am so cold, and I am beginning to tire from trudging through the thick drifts of snow. Have I seen that rock before? Am I going in circles? Ah, another signal flag up ahead! If I can just reach it.

I am thrilled to finally reach the bright red signal flag flapping vigorously in the wind. But where is Matoro? Which way do I go? My victory is brief. I must continue to search for Matoro in the blinding snow.

At first my spirits lift, as the signal flags are now easier to find. I move from one to another, each time thinking that this will be the one that brings me to Matoro. But each time I am disappointed.

And then, the signal flags are gone. There is nothing to see but snow, snow, and more snow. I am very tired now. So sleepy. At least I'm not cold anymore. I feel a warm sensation all over. I decide to take a brief rest.

All is dark as I close my eyes. I am grateful to bid rid of the omnipresent white. I am dreaming. Words are floating through my head, racing away from me. And then a symbol floats before me. It grows larger as it comes closer to me. Closer, closer, closer.

Before I can figure out what the symbol means, it disappears and I hear someone speaking to me. "Energy..." he offers. I take it. "Rest..." he says. I close my eyes once more.

When I awake, I am in a cave. Matoro is nearby. I recognize him by the signal flag he carries. Before I can speak to him, Matoro is alerted to something outside. Perhaps he has trapped a Rahi. He leaves the cave. I have strength enough only to watch.

A tall stranger is barely visible on the horizon. But he is not responsible for tripping Matoro's wire. No, certainly the very large and angry Rahi nearby has done that.

Matoro is caught off-guard, but raises his pickaxe to protect himself. It is of no consequence however as the Rahi easily swats him into a snowbank. It appears all is lost for Matoro as the Rahi moves in for the kill.

The Rahi's attack is stopped though by the sudden appearance of the tall stranger. He is armed with a sword and shield, and he is blocking the Rahi's path. The Rahi strikes out at the stranger, but too late. The stranger has quickly moved away.

As he turns to face the beast, the stranger's mask changes shape and, instantly, he is gone. The Rahi looks about for the stranger, confused by his disappearance. Soon, the sound of sword striking Rahi armor echoes around us.

The stranger retreats and circles around invisibly for another attack. His footprints in the snow give him away however, and the Rahi strikes. The stranger is caught within the jaws of the beast, shaken, and thrown into a drift.

The stranger reappears from the drift. His mask changes again. As it does so, two more strangers appear. They all look exactly alike.

Now even more befuddled, the Rahi looks first from one stranger, then to the next, and then to the next as they back him onto an overhang of cliff. The three strangers draw their swords together. Apparently surrounded with no chance of escape, the Rahi chooses his target and strikes.

Unfortunately for the Rahi, he has chosen incorrectly. The stranger he attacks is but a chimera who merely shimmers and disappears after the assault. The remaining two strangers thrust their swords into the ground, breaking off the overhang. The roar of the Rahi echoes mournfully as it plummets downward into the swirling mists of snow.

Matoro, having regained his feet, walks up next to the stranger and gazes over the cliff. No sooner has he done this than he is alone, for the other stranger's mask has returned to its original form and his doppelganger is gone.

Some time later, we are safely back in the Sanctum. The stranger, whom I now know to be Toa Kopaka, has left us. Matoro is by Turaga Nuju's side. I approach them both.

"I will translate Nuju's words for you, traveler," says Matoro. "He has been watching you for a long time. Your role in Mata Nui's destiny is more important than you know. Mata Nui sleeps, but you, like the Toa, shall be an agent of his awakening.

"Nuju knows that you wish to ask questions of him and he will answer them. When you are done, he wishes to ask a question of you. What questions do you wish to ask Nuju, traveler?"

"Where are the Toa?" I ask Nuju.

Nuju erupts in a string of beeps, clicks, and whistles. Matoro is listening intently and nods his head.

"The Toa will unite and find more power in the joining," Matoro translates. "They shall merge their skills, their knowledge, their wills to become Wisdom and Valor, named in prophecy Wairuha and Akamai. In these forms, they are the Toa Kaita. The Toa Kaita will, at last, confront the Makuta.

"During their absence, the people of Mata Nui must work together to protect their homes and all that they know. They will need great courage, for the Toa will not be here to protect them."

"What will happen to Mata Nui?" I wonder aloud.

There are more clicks and whistles, and then Matoro continues. "Nuju says that you must understand this: that in creation, there is destruction. In destruction, there is rebirth. There is no such thing as void; all things are in flux.

"If the Toa triumph, Mata Nui will know great joy... and great change. The darkness will be dispelled, but we will have to guard our island well to ensure no other evil rises to take its place."

I contemplate this for a while. When the silence becomes awkward, I reluctantly ask, "What question?"

"You are the one that will guide the Matoran," Matoro translates after Nuju's flurry of sounds. "But only if you have learned what was necessary to learn during your travels."

"With the Toa Kaita beneath the earth, the Matoran must fortify their villages and brace for a great battle. There must also be created an alliance, a small group assembled from whomever the Turaga can spare, to help the Toa on their final quest."

"Nuju's question is this: To what place shall you lead the alliance?"

This is an unanticipated question. I thought perhaps Nuju would ask me to do something. Instead, he is telling what I am to do testing me to see if I am up to the task.

I consider all of the places I have seen on my journey. I think hard upon where an alliance can do the most good. Then suddenly it comes to me. I know where we must go, and I tell Turaga Nuju.

Nuju nods his head in the affirmative. "So be it," says Matoro. "Nuju believes that you are the one who can accomplish this task. Take this message to all the Turaga of the villages, and they can begin their fateful preparations. Nuju believes in you, adventurer."

II

## “The Alliance”

As much as I welcome Nuju’s beeps, clicks, and whistles of trust in me, I have to admit to myself that I am not as confident. Still, I take the message and set out to fulfill the task.

Once clear of the Sanctum, I take out the flute from Le-Koro. If I am to travel to all the Turaga, I will need to do so quickly. I play the new flutesong, and look to the skies. Soon, as promised, a Kahu bird appears, ready to fly me anywhere on the island. I decide to start with Turaga Vakama in Ta-Koro. But first, I have to deliver some bad news to a friend.

“So,” says Jala. “It is as I feared. My North March scouts have been taken by the Makuta. There may still be hope for them. They will not be forgotten.”

I leave a somber Jala and take Nuju’s message to Vakama. “Thank you, adventurer, for showing this to me,” Vakama says after I show him the message. “You are as noble as your reputation, and as resourceful.”

The other Turaga convey similar sentiments to me when I present them with Nuju’s message. Soon, all have been alerted, and I head back to Ko-Koro to tell Nuju it is so.

Before I reach Nuju though, I come suddenly upon Kapura. I would have sworn he was not there a moment ago. He looks very out-of-place in the snowy white of Ko-Koro.

He greets me. “Hello. You are the Chronicler. I have been looking for you. Vakama wishes to speak with you.”

“Where is Vakama?” I ask.

“Vakama is in Ta-Koro,” Kapura replies.

Well, I was just in Ta-Koro delivering Nuju’s message. Why did he not tell me then? Perhaps he realized I needed to finish delivering Nuju’s message to the other Turaga first. “What does Vakama want?” I ask.

“I know only that it is a matter of great urgency,” says Kapura.

“How did you get here?” I query.

“It is as Vakama said. I practiced, and became skilled. I now know the secret art of traveling great distances by moving very slowly. It is a small matter for me to be wherever I am not. It is a useful skill.

“You should go to Vakama now,” he urges. “It is important.”

I agree to go.

"I am to accompany you," says Kapura. "Let us go together."

We ride the cablecar together down the mountain to Ta-Koro and then walk into Vakama's hut.

Vakama greets us. "Chronicler, it is good of you to come. And thank you, Kapura, for fulfilling your mission so quickly. I see that you have indeed gained skill.

"The Toa have left for the Kini-Nui, to begin their final quest. We must help them, but our villages are beset by Rahi on all sides. I ask that you pursue a mission of grave importance."

"What are the Toa doing?" I ask.

"The Toa have begun their quest to destroy the Makuta, and bring light and happiness back to Mata Nui. They have recovered the Golden Kanohi, and are en route to Kini-Nui. In the temple is a passage through which they will enter the Makuta's dark realm.

"Once inside, the Makuta will attempt to destroy them, and they will be beset by Manas: unimaginable horrors that guard his domain. They will face these fearsome challenges as the Toa Kaita, and there will be great battle."

"The Toa are much stronger than I!" I protest. "How can I be of help to them?"

"The Makuta is treacherous," says Vakama. "I believe he knows the Toa are coming, and is massing Rahi to attack the Kini-Nui after the Toa have passed through.

"I fear he will attempt to seal the Toa in his underworld, imprisoning them there forever. Or, worse, should the Toa attempt to flee, he will set the Rahi to ambush them as they emerge through the passage. With the horrible Manas in front and the Rahi behind, the Toa are caught in a vice that will assuredly crush them."

I ponder this for a moment, and then I ask reluctantly, "What is my mission?"

"You must defend the Kini-Nui against the Rahi while the Toa are underground," replies Vakama. "I know you are brave and resourceful, but even you cannot do this alone.

"You must assemble a fellowship. Of my left and right hands, Jala should remain here to command his Guard and defend Ta-Koro. My left hand is Kapura, who is with you now. He will go. He may seem slow and strange to you, but his simple words often carry a hidden wisdom.

"Go first to the other villages. They are besieged, but I have talked with the Turaga. I'm certain that they can all spare at least one Matoran to aid in this task. Once your Company has been

gathered, you must travel to the Kini-Nui. Its road begins where the river ends at Ga-Koro, and falls from a great height.

“This mission is vital. The Toa, and indeed all of Mata Nui, need you now.”

Although I am not eager to begin this task, I sense that our conversation here is over and I bid Vakama goodbye.

“May Mata Nui smile on you and your party, Chronicler,” Vakama says as we leave. “We shall face our own hardships here, but they will bear better knowing you have sped on your task.”

Kapura and I first ride the cablecar back to Ko-Koro to speak with Turaga Nuju. I only hope Matoro is still at his side.

“Nuju is pleased that you have delivered the messages, Chronicler,” Matoro translates, for he is indeed still here in the Sanctum with Nuju. “Now Fate is upon us; Rahi have come out of the Drifts like a storm, and press against our walls!

“He sees that you are seeking a hero to join your Company. The Ko-Koronans try to stay out of the affairs of others, but this time they have no choice but to act.

“Nuju says to find Kopeke, his left hand. He dwells in a cave near the cablecar. Kopeke will not offer great company, for he is hard and likes solitude; but you will find that what he lacks in cheer is made up for with strength and skill. He is our greatest sportsman, and also the most skilled in ice-craft.

“In his hands, a block of ice can become like anything in imagination, from a delicate crystal flower to a gleaming statue of Kopaka, perfect in every detail.”

I thank Nuju for his time, then Kapura and I head back toward the cablecar, for we passed Kopeke without stopping on the way here. This time, we stop.

“Will you join my party and come to Kini-Nui?” I ask Kopeke.

“I will come,” is his reply.

The three of us take the cablecar down to Ta-Koro and then head through the tunnel to Le-Koro. There, at the bottom of the tree, we meet one of the villagers. We hear him sniff, as if he were crying.

“Oh — hello,” he greets us. “Matau Singer and Kongu Pilot, uptree they are. Rama-swarm threatens and all good Le-Koronans fly defense. Highbranch home locked and protected. Downtree guard am I, set here because... I fly not.”

With no way up to the top of the tree, I appear to have no other choice than to seek help from this fellow. “Will you join our Company?” I ask.

“Join I will!” he replies eagerly. “Highbranch home safely guarded, no Rahi approach through brush, only from sky! I am Tamaru, highfly Vinesman and deepwood Wayfinder! Of great help to you can I be!”

I am not so certain of that, as I seem to recall that Tamaru is the villager who fell out of the tree and onto his head when I first came to Le-Koro. Be that as it may, the four of us head back to the tunnel and on to Onu-Koro to speak with Turaga Whenua.

“I have been expecting you, traveler,” Whenua greets us. “You are here to find Matoran that might join your quest. It is a hard choice, since the Rahi have been massing underground, and will attack us at any moment!

“Onepu is brave and strong, and would be the best choice. But he and his Ussalry regiments are needed to defend the caves. Taipu, instead, should go. He is not, perhaps, the brightest Lightstone in Onu-Koro, but his strength is equaled only by his heart.

“With all the work that goes on here, it is dangerous to let any go with you — let alone our strongest digger. But Taipu has spoken of nothing but you and adventure since his visit to Le-Koro, and so I feel it would be wrong to keep him here.

“You may take Taipu. He is in the Great Mine, hard at work, as usual.”

Taipu is indeed in the Great Mine, but I would not say that he is hard at work. His mind most certainly does seem to be elsewhere.

“It’s you!” exclaims Taipu when he see us. “Are we to go on another adventure together?” he asks. “I would like that very much. Mata Nui is truly a wondrous place. I should like to see more of it!”

“Will you join our Company?” I ask.

“Yes, I will join you!” is his enthusiastic reply.

We all head back to Onu-Koro and then out toward Po-Koro to speak to Turaga Onewa.

“Hello again, Chronicler,” Onewa greets us. It seems that dark times have fallen again across my village. Nui-Jaga, and worse, are secretly massing in the deserts outside town. I fear that even the great skill of our stone-workers cannot fashion walls high enough to defend us. But we must try.



“I have heard of your mission. You are seeking Matoran to join your Company. These are trying times, and it is hard to part with even my least able craftsmen, but nonetheless I know of the importance of your task.

“Huki I would send, but he is still recovering from his illness, and he is sorely needed here besides. So instead take my left-hand, Hafu. Hafu is very proud, and does not always listen to wise counsel, but his digging and stone-craft are matched by none in Po-Koro.

“Take him with you. Doubtless he is out in the desert, caring for the waysigns on the road, and seeing that no harm comes to his masterworks.”

Hafu is indeed caring for the waysigns. We passed him on our way into the village. We head back out to speak to him.

“I’m not giving any carving lessons today,” he says, misunderstanding our intent. “Don’t you know there are Rahi about?

“If you want to see my artwork, you should do so in Po-Koro. It is safer there, although I do not know for how long. Please don’t bother me. I have to finish my masterpiece before the Rahi attack.”

We explain what we are doing and ask him to join our Company.

“So, you have need of my great skills,” Hafu boasts. “Who am I to deny fame and glory, even if I do not last to see it? I will join your Company.”

The six of us set off for the beach of Po-Wahi. From there we take the boat to Ga-Koro to speak with Turaga Nokama.

“Hello again, adventurer,” says Nokama when she sees us. “It is nice to see you, even though trouble often walks alongside you. Even now, the waters are filled with horrible Rahi, bent on our destruction!

“I confess I have feared your arrival. Kotu and Maku are very dear to me, so I am sorry to send them with you on such a dangerous mission. It is harder even to choose which one I would rather see go.

“Kotu, I think, needs to stay here with me and maintain the village’s defense. So it is Maku, my right hand, which you should take. She has been told to stay in her hut until now, and her love of Huki and adventure has made it a hard punishment. I fear her cheer at being allowed to go outside will blind her to the dangers of your task. Yet, she is good with boats, and her agility and acrobatic training makes her a valuable warrior!

“The way to the Kini-Nui lies behind the waterfall near our village. It is likely that Maku can find a boat to get through the falls. You will find her in her hut.”

“Hello, Chronicler!” says Maku when we stop by her hut. “I heard Huki was sick, and that you helped him become better. Thank you! I mean... that is, I’m sure the Po-Koronans are glad to have him back.

“I wish Nokama would let me go visit Huki, but the Rahi are going to attack again, and everyone is building barricades around the village.”

“Will you join our party?” I ask.

“Yes, I will come with you!” is Maku’s eager reply. “It will be good to go out on adventures again!”

## “Kini-Nui”

Our party of misfits is complete. We walk to the beach and head toward the waterfall. I have seen it before, but others of my Company have not.

“This land is a place of beauty, and also of sadness. There is no greater craftsman than Mata Nui!” says Hafu.

“The waterfall is so beautiful! Like a million Lightstones tossed in the air!” adds Taipu.

“Vakama says the road to the Kini-Nui lies on the other side of those falls,” says Kapura.

“I can swim, if we need to cross the falls,” says Tamaru. “But I’m not sure about the others.”

“By Pohatu!” exclaims Hafu. “Horrid stuff, water. I wouldn’t swim in it if the Makuta himself were at my back, and don’t know how besides!”

“I can help us cross!” says Maku. “I used to go boating here, in safer times. If it’s weathered the storms, my canoe is still hidden in the bushes along the bank.”

Maku finds her boat among the bushes and motions for us to help put it into the water. We all board, and Maku steers us into the waterfall. Behind it is an underground stream.

We travel the underground waterway inland until we emerge from the tunnel and reach green, forested hills. This is clearly an ancient path. We come upon a bridge that appears to have given way. I don’t know how we can continue.

“That’s odd,” says Maku. “There used to be a bridge here... what can have happened to it?”

“Whether by storm or some darker force, the bridge that stood here is gone for good. Not even I can craft a new one!” proclaims Hafu.

“When I stand at the edge and look down, it makes me dizzy,” adds Taipu unhelpfully.

“Perhaps a flying Le-Koronan can figure a way across,” hints Maku.

Tamaru thinks quickly. In no time at all, he has fashioned a rope of vine and tied it to a nearby tree. He then hurls himself out over the chasm and swings up to the other side. He lands in a bush, but he signals that he is OK. He secures the rope, and one by one we work our way to the other side. When all are safely across, we continue down the pathway through the dense forest.

The chatter among our Company is cheerful and upbeat.

“With such Company, Makuta-beasts have much to fear!” says Tamaru.

“It is good to be on an adventure with you again!” says Maku. “I thought Nokama would keep me locked up in the village forever.”

“Are we there yet?” asks Taipu.

“If you practice, you can move quickly,” replies Kapura.

As the trees begin to clear, it becomes apparent that another obstacle has been strewn across our path. Where there was once a passage through these rocky hills, we now reach a wall of fallen rocks and stone.

“I came this way once,” says Maku, “and this rockslide was not here. Something calls forth the very earth to block our path! This is a fell sign.”

“My stonecraft is great indeed, Chronicler! I can cut through these stones,” says Hafu. “But I should also need great skill at digging, such as Taipu possesses.”

“Digging in rock is what the Onu-Koronans do best,” says Taipu proudly. “I will clear a route with your help.”

Taipu quickly begins clearing rocks as Hafu sets about cutting away the stone. They work quickly and a large cloud of dust surrounds them as they do so.

“Another Hafu original,” proclaims Hafu as the dust settles. We are surprised to see an enormous statue of Hafu standing next to the newly opened pass. We admire it for but a moment, and are once again on our way.

Our trip takes us higher up into the snow-capped mountains. We come upon a large, stone carving of a face.

“This is the portal to the Kini-Nui,” says Maku. “On the other side lies our destination! But I fear our long journey is for nothing, for our astrologer has spoken of these gates.”

“These gates are ancient, and fashioned by a hand whose skill rivals even my own,” says Hafu. “I have not much hope for any who try trespass without the key. Perhaps Kopeke can wield some ice-lore to get us past this place?”

Kopeke, who has had little to say on our journey, does not speak now either, but instead sets to work. He carefully examines the lock in the mouth of the face. He travels a short way to an icy drift. The sun has melted large icicles onto its lip. He breaks one off and begins crafting a key.

The key fits perfectly into the lock and the door opens swiftly. We are free to pass through the portal. On the other side, deep in a protected green valley, is Kini-Nui. We climb down to the valley and cross the woods to the temple.

Here are assembled all six Toa. They are deep in discussion among themselves.

"This is where we begin our final task," says Tahu. "If any of you question our choice, or doubt our chances if we work together, speak now!"

"I have doubted you in the past, Tahu," replies Kopaka, "but no more. I think I speak for all of us when I say that our only hope is to work together. So I cast my sword with yours, if you will have it."

"I will have it gladly, Kopaka," affirms Tahu. "You are all in assent?"

All of the Toa nod their heads in agreement.

"Then it is decided!" proclaims Tahu. "Together, the Makuta cannot resist us!"

"Wait, Tahu!" Lewa interjects. "Have you given no thought to our return? If the Rahi attack the Temple while we are below, how can we escape?"

"I do not know the answer to that question, Lewa," replies Tahu, and he hangs his head. "So grim is this task, that I have not thought it much use to consider anything beyond our meeting with the Makuta."

"Hold!" shouts Onua. "There is an intruder among us!" Onua turns and looks upon us. "But... what is this?"

"Stay your claws, Onua!" Gali urges. "It is the Chronicler, and his Company!"

"Little one, you are brave indeed, to have come all this way," Gali says as she turns to us. "And I see you have gathered help from all the villages around!"

"Tahu, it is as I hoped," continues Gali. "These Matoran can guard the Kini-Nui while we descend, and see that no Rahi attacks us from behind."

"The Rahi are fearsome," says Lewa. "May their hearts prove greater than their size would suggest!"

"In truth it is said that great power can be found in small packages..." says Pohatu, "and that aid can come from places least expected. And besides, we have few options."

“So be it,” says Tahu. “Chronicler, it is your doom to remain here, and guard the Kini-Nui at all costs. This deed will be remembered as long as any remain to sing of it!

“Friends,” Tahu says to the other Toa, “we have much to do and little time. Let’s go!”

Tahu and the other Toa move away toward the temple. Gali stays behind for a moment to address me.

“Before I go, Chronicler,” says Gali, “Know that there is a bond between us. Your struggles and those of your friends will be much to bear. I shall be with you in heart.

“Look for me in your dreams. I will come to you then, and speak to you of the things we see underground. Remember them.

“Goodbye! And do not let the Temple fall!”

With that, Gali and the other Toa ascend the steps of the Temple. They gather in a circle at the top. Their masks change color to gold. They each hold out a fragment of stone.

The pieces of stone levitate out over the center of the Temple and then join together to form a ball. As they do so, the Temple opens up and the Toa descend into its gaping maw.

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As we wait, I take stock of our Company’s strengths and weaknesses.

“Fire-Matoran always fare well against Muaka and Ice Rahi,” says Kapura. “It is Water-Rahi, Tarakava and Nui-Rama, that we fear.”

“Onu-Koro always fares well against Water Rahi such as Nui-Rama and Water Tarakava,” says Taipu. “But we fear the swift Nui-Kopen of Air!”

“The Nui-Kopen are beasts of Air and cannot resist my mighty strength!” brags Hafu. “Muaka and other Ice Rahi are sometimes a challenge.”

“All Jagas feared by Le-Koro!” says Tamaru. “Send me instead against Earth-beast Kuma-Nui, and victory will I bring!”

“Like Le-Koronans, we of Ice fear the fiery Kofo-Jaga,” says Kopeke. “But we easily crack the hard Nui-Jaga and Sand Tarakava, beasts of Stone!”

“My people have always fought best against Fire Rahi, such as the Kofo-Jaga,” says Maku. “But the Earth-Rahi Kuma-Nui is hard for us to battle.”

We have no time to consider the fate of the Toa, for there is a cry of “Here come the Rahi!” and we are ambushed by a Nui-Rama. All of our brave little Company assembles to protect the Temple. Each Matoran lets fly disc after disc until the Rahi is defeated.

Then all goes dark. Perhaps the Rahi has struck a blow against me. But no, this is a vision of what is transpiring below. I see the Toa, only I don’t see them whole. Instead, it is as though they have been taken apart. Their parts are mixing and combining together.

“It is here that we join. Spirit of Valor, hear me!”

Tahu, Pohatu, and Onua have joined to become one. “I — am — Akamai!” he says.

Gali, Lewa, and Kopaka have also joined to together. “Spirit of Wisdom, hear me!” he says. “I — am — Wairuha!”

“So, Wairuha, you are joined,” says Akamai. “Let us now choose a path and go into the darkness to face our destiny... be it good or ill.”

“Our way lies not together, Akamai,” replies Wairuha. “We must face what evils are before us alone. I choose this road. You take the other. With luck we will come together again, at the gates of Mangaia!”

With that, the two Toa Kaita part ways. I am not certain, but I think I see two more eyes in the darkness awaken and follow one of them.

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Another fierce battle with the Rahi ensues. There are more of them this time, but we fight hard and hold our ground.

“Stay here!” Kapura counsels. “We can fall back, but not far. If they push us back over the Kini-Nui, all will be lost. We must win against the Rahi!”

“Stop them here,” Kopeke agrees. “It is here the Toa will return to, though it may be days. We must not fall back from here, whatever the cost.”

The battle begins anew. Discs are flying furiously. The Rahi battle long and hard, but ultimately we are victorious.

Then, I am hit with another vision. Akamai has stumbled upon a nest of crab-like creatures. These must be the terrible Manas I heard of earlier.

Another cry rings out. Even more Rahi descend upon us. I don’t know how much longer we can hold out. The Company chatters among themselves, trying to keep their spirits up.

“Stonecraft requires great dexterity!” says Hafu, more to the Rahi than to us. “When I take aim, I hit my mark! And my strength, too, is to be reckoned with!”

“Whenua says I am the strongest in all of Onu-Koro,” adds Taipu. “I just wish the Rahi would stand still!”

“In battle I am quick, Chronicler, and can often strike quickdodge Rahi,” says Tamaru. “Highjump and lowduck I do too! Strike lightly but often!”

“In Ga-Koro we train in acrobatics,” says Maku. “I am quick enough to send against the fastest Rahi! In battle it is skill I rely on, rather than strength.”

“Slow I am, and quick,” says Kapura. “Engaged, it is hard to avoid the blows of Rahi, or strike at the masks of the quick ones. But I travel instantly. I can go far without tiring, if it is your will, Chronicler.”

“We of Ko-Koro are balanced in strength and agility,” says Kopeke. “Only hardy Matoran can withstand the wind and ice of Ko-Koro. These Rahi will find me tough to overcome.”

“Some of these Rahi are very big!” notes Maku. “If they manage to strike me, I may not withstand it. But they will find that hard to do!”

“Rahi are strong, hardluck have I lest quickdodge save me,” says Tamaru.

“Like the great statues of Po-Koro I stand!” brags Hafu. “I am not as stout as Taipu, perhaps, but far more clever!”

“A long time ago, many rocks fell on my head,” says Taipu. “That did not hurt much. Neither do these Rahi.”

Greatly battered and nearing exhaustion, our Company repels this latest assault by the Rahi. I have no time to rest before I am overcome by darkness once more.

Wairuha too is beset by the horrible Manas. He fends off a frontal assault, but he is caught unaware by an attack from behind. A Manas strikes him a mighty blow, and Wairuha falls to the floor.

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Once more the Rahi come. We have no more energy for talking. Discs are flying once more. We fight hard, but it is not going well. Several of our company have lost their masks and had to retreat. Finally, the Rahi have had enough, and they also retreat.

Then out of the forests they come. From all around they come. The Rahi surround us.



"It's horrible," says Maku.

"There must be hundreds of Rahi out there," notes Hafu.

"We're doomed, doomed!" adds Taipu.

"I will stand with you Chronicler, no matter what," says Kapura.

"I shall never see sing-song Le-Koro ever again. Oh, woe!" mourns Tamaru. And then he points to the sky and shouts. "Here they come!"

Suddenly, the Nui-Rama that is about to swoop down upon us is struck. Its mask falls to the ground at our feet.

"Look to the sky!" cries Tamaru. "Kongu! It's Kongu!"

The Kahu riders of Le-Koro have come to our rescue! And they are not alone. From the depths of the ground spring forth Onepu and his regiments of Ussalry. And then Jala appears, along with his Guard, from behind a ridge. They let fly with a barrage of discs. Perhaps we stand a chance after all. But then the darkness overtakes me again.

Wairuha gets back up on his feet. Another Manas leaps at Wairuha, but Akamai has arrived and swats it away. The victory is minor however. The two Toa Kaita are clearly outnumbered.

"This, then, is how it ends, Wairuha," says Akamai.

"For these monsters also, Akamai!" replies Wairuha. "We will not go down without a fight!"

Another Manas strikes, and Wairuha is knocked backward into a small metallic tower, destroying it. Sparks fly, and then one of the Manas goes limp.

"Wairuha, wait!" shouts Akamai. "These strange towers... maybe..."

Soon, the two Toa Kaita are carving up control towers left and right. As they do so, the Manas go dark and collapse. Eventually, all of the Manas are lying lifeless on the floor.

"We have survived!" declares Akamai.

"For now," Wairuha replies. "We were lucky. Wisdom provides only when valor is in its service."

The two Toa Kaita move toward a large, engraved door. It opens at their approach and they walk through it.

"I feel... strange," says Akamai. "Feels like — being torn apart!"

And with that, the two Toa Kaita fall. In their place, the six Toa now stand.

“What has happened?” asks Tahu.

Gali answers. “The spirit of Makuta... is the spirit of destruction. This is his inner realm. The Toa Kaita cannot exist here.”

“The Manas nearly destroyed the Toa Kaita,” frets Pohatu. “And the Makuta is ten times greater than they. What hope do we have?”

“The Toa Kaita merely gave physical form to the force of our unity,” Gali says. “We still possess it, in our hearts.”

“But the Toa Kaitas’ wisdom and valor were unmatched,” Lewa interjects.

“Where wisdom and valor fail,” replies Tahu, “All that remains is faith. And it can overcome all.”

“Gali is right,” Tahu continues. “We must go on.”

All of the Toa nod in agreement.

“Heed us, Chronicler!” Gali is addressing me directly now. “We step, now, through the gates of doom! Our link is broken. If you wish to fulfill your destiny, and record the last moments of this time... you must find us.”

And then her eyes narrow and she stares hard at me. “FIND US!” she implores.

## “Mangaia”

“Chronicler, wake up!” I struggle to open my eyes. Is that Maku talking to me? “Please wake up!” she says.

The battle for Kini-Nui is over. The Rahi are gone and the Matoran are victorious. My Company surround me, congratulating each other on our good fortune.

“Rahi disappear, and Matau confused,” says Kongu, explaining their arrival at Kini-Nui. “Thought: Rahi fallback here, to destroy Kini-Nui. So fastfly we come, to aid!”

“The Kini-Nui is safe now,” says Jala. “I think, though, that this day’s trials are far from over. The Toa are still underground.”

“Something strange has happened in Onu-Koro,” says Onepu as I turn around. “Whenua says you should come there, and quickly. But not on foot.”

“Take Puku! She followed us all the way here. I think she has been looking for you.”

Puku does look eager to greet me. “Okay, girl,” I say to myself. “Let’s go!”

We quickly arrive in Onu-Koro. It is good that Puku knows the way, for the tunnels have been barricaded. I seek out Whenua.

“You are safe, Chronicler,” Whenua greets me. “That is good. The Prophecies, then, are still truthful.

“They say Gali has called on you. There has been a disturbance in the Great Mine. The Golden Mask you discovered has disappeared, and a passage has opened there.

“My workers are too afraid to go near it. We believe it is another entrance to the Makuta’s lair. It is your destiny to find the Toa, Chronicler, no matter what the outcome. I hope you have the courage to face it.”

There does not seem to be anything else to say. I bid Whenua goodbye, and then I head for the Great Mine. I, too, hope I have the courage to face my destiny.

When I reach the bottom of the Great Mine, the Golden Mask is indeed gone. I can now approach the pedestal.

When I push the button, the pedestal disappears into the floor. Suddenly, the walls retract far away from me. Now the floor itself is descending swiftly, down, down into the darkness below. It stops when I reach the floor of a large, dark chamber.

I work my way forward, past the damaged towers and the lifeless Manas, toward the large, open doorway.

Through the doorway, I see them. All six Toa have assembled around a swirling vortex of debris.

“Makuta!” shouts Tahu. “We have come!”

From the unseen depths of the chamber, a small Matoran steps forward.

“What?!” exclaims Tahu in disbelief.

“I have been waiting for you,” says the Matoran as he steps into the light. He is covered from head to toe in pockmarks, corrosion, and ooze.

“But you — you are — ” objects Tahu.

“I am that which you are sworn to protect,” says the Matoran.

“Tahu, it’s a trick!” interjects Kopaka. “We must destroy him!”

“Destroy me?” says the Matoran defiantly. “You cannot destroy me. No more than you can destroy the sea, or the wind. Or... the void.”

“You are like the sea?” objects Gali. “The sea bears life! The sea bore us!”

“I bore you,” says the Matoran. “For I am Nothing. And out of Nothing, you came. And it is into Nothing that you will go.

“I stand with Mata Nui,” he continues, “side by side. I am his brother.

“The people of the world are builders. But look into their hearts... and you will find that they also have the power to destroy. I am that power. I am destruction. And I WILL destroy you.”

“But...” says Tahu, still not believing, “You are but a Matoran!”

“You expected something else?” asks Makuta. “Something like... THIS!?”

And as he says this, Makuta transforms himself, joining with the swirling debris. He reaches out with long twisting arms to swat away the Toa, one by one. Even the protective forces of the Hau mask can not protect Onua as Makuta’s arms approach him from behind and take him unaware.

“Our only hope is to work together!” shouts Tahu over the now-roaring sound of the vortex.

Tahu brings the full force of fire upon Makuta in a swirling inferno of flame. Kopaka likewise lets loose a stream of swirling ice. Gali directs a twisting torrent of water at Makuta. Lewa

unleashes a vortex of his own in a strong gust of air. Onua summons forth a blast of earth that reaches the Makuta at the same time as a mighty shockwave issued forth from Pohatu's stomping foot. The converging forces of all six Toa are too much for Makuta to bear.

"You cannot destroy me," says Makuta defiantly. "For I am Nothing."

And with that, the vortex collapses and Makuta is gone. It appears that the Toa have completed their task, for they are now being transported, one by one, out of the chamber.

"But — what has happened to the Chronicler?" asks Gali. And then she too is transported away.

I peek out from behind the now-lifeless pile of debris. There is a door at the other side of this chamber. I step through it and discover a room that stretches endlessly in each direction. The wall is not solid, but is instead a collection of stacked pods. I move closer to get a look into one of the pods.

As I gaze into the pod to see what is inside, I notice something moving as if awakening from a very long sleep. Suddenly, it looks right at me and I get a funny feeling that perhaps I should not be here. The creature comes bursting out of its pod and faces me. As I turn and run, I hear another. And another. And another...

I am running as fast as I can away from the creatures, desperately trying to find a way out of these chambers and back to the surface. Then I see it: a golden device with a missing piece. I know that piece! I have it in my backpack.

I am searching desperately in my backpack for it. No, not the flute. Not the Heat Stone or the letter or the ensign. Ah, here it is! The golden chisel!

I place the chisel into the device. I am instantly surrounded by a bubble of energy and lifted from the floor just as the creatures converge upon me. I am floating up, upward out of the chamber. Then I am whisked swiftly along a dark tunnel. A door opens up ahead, and I am spit out upon a beach.

I am back where I started this adventure. Vakama is here, watching the water and waiting for me. I go to him.

"So. You have surprised us again, Chronicler," says Vakama. "We feared your courage led you to a final adventure. But it seems you may have many more in the future."

"You seem afraid," Vakama continues. "I know what you saw in that cave. Our Prophecies said the Makuta's defeat would end our troubles. But the Prophecies have changed."

“Something yet darker looms ahead of us. But for now, put these thoughts from your mind. There are many reasons for the people of Mata Nui to rejoice!

“When we first met, and you found my mask — and my Firestaff — and indeed fulfilled requests for all the Turaga — you were thought to be an outcast.

“No Matoran travels from village to village, having adventures. The people of Ta-Koro did not trust you and feared your adventurous ways. They were certain it would bring us ill luck.

“But you have proven us all wrong, Takua. You stand like the Toa among Mata Nui’s greatest heroes. Come! Let us leave this windy beach and return to the light and heat of Ta-Koro.

“Many friends await you there!”

I look up into the night sky. The red star has moved into its final position from the telescope panels. And then the sky erupts with many beautiful colors as fireworks go off in celebration. After my long adventure, it is good to be going home.