

Okaparnis Story Quest Ch. 1 – Memories and Promises

You wake up and see a cat. It mews and then licks your nose. You tell it to go away, but it just snuggles up against you, so you pet it and it starts to purr. There is sunlight coming in through the window; it's another beautiful day in Okaparnis!

You are so excited for today; Tira said the dolphins would be back and that she'd love for you to meet them! Tira is a young girl around your age. She absolutely loves swimming in the ocean. She told you once that her mom works far away, in Corto Vanail. Tira says that her mom studies coral and other sea life for a living. She always gets excited and very sad whenever she talks about her mom. But, she just sounds angry when she talks about her dad. He is apparently some sort of fisherman adventurer. He disappeared somewhere around the Underground Lake near the Glasslands some time ago.

You run down to the water and meet Tira. She looks lost in thought. "It's strange," she says. "What's that?" you ask. "It's been less than a week, but I feel like we've known each other for years," she explains. Then Tira asks, "Do you remember how we met?" You respond, "I don't think I'll ever forget that day. I had just arrived in town and was looking for a place to sleep when suddenly these guys surrounded me..."

"Rancid rabbits and rambunctious reindeer, who do we have here?" says a scraggly older man. He's dressed like a clown, but the look in his eyes tells you he's not here to make you laugh. You try to back away, but are confronted by two of his friends, who try to intimidate you. Your heart is pounding in your head and you feel nauseated. You try to figure out how this can be happening to you... It's not even dark outside!

One of his friends says, "I'm done playing around, Veman. This is boring. Let's get to the good stuff already!" "Grrrr! Raco, you rascal, how dare you say my name!!!" screams Veman, the older, clown-dressed man. "After we finish with this one, you're next!" Raco and Veman continue to fight, while the third friend laughs hysterically.

"Run!" you hear from somewhere. Stunned, you look around for where the voice came from... "Don't look, stupid! Just RUN!" says the voice. This time, you don't hesitate; you run as fast and as far as you can. You even make sure to run in-between buildings in order to hide better and luckily, you never see the men again.

Finally, you run out of breath and feel safer. You've reached the water's edge, so you sit down on the beach and rest. The sand is still warm from the heat of the day and the sun is beginning to set, casting a golden-pink hue over the water.

After maybe thirty minutes, you hear someone approaching. Your heart begins to race again and you fear that the muggers have finally found you. You get up to run, but then you notice that it's just a girl. She looks to be about your age, and she's grinning from ear-to-ear.

She comes up to you and introduces herself as Tira. She compliments you on how fast you can run and laughs as she details how she led the men away from you, into a thicket of thorn bushes. "It was hilarious how they screamed and hollered as they kept getting pricked and prodded by the thorns," she says while laughing. "Eventually they forgot all about you and went back home to remove thorns from their butts."

You think to yourself that she must have been the person who told you to run, so you tell her thank you for helping out. She says it was nothing; she's just tired of these new people bullying others. She tells you:

"Okaparnis has become a place of poverty and crime recently. It wasn't always like this. It used to be a place filled with friendly, honest people. Sure, there would be thieving, but mostly only by the street kids who don't know any better. Even then, the street vendors would just send those kids on errands for them to make up for the goods they stole.

But, ever since those people from Corto Vanail started showing up, things have gotten pretty rough. Food is in short supply, nobody can find jobs, and crime has skyrocketed. I don't know why everyone is leaving that place, but something bad must be going on there."

"It's funny looking back on it, but at the time, it was definitely scary," you say with a chuckle. You look over at Tira. She seems so sad. "What's wrong?" you ask. "It's nothing," she says. "It's just that when you mentioned Corto Vanail, it reminded me of my mom." "I'm worried about her," she explains. "I want to go to Corto Vanail to make sure she's okay. Will you come with me?" You aren't sure what to say, but she is your best friend, and she did save your life, so the least you can do would be to accompany her on her journey. "Absolutely!" you exclaim. "I'd love to join you!"

Task 1: Give a two or three sentence summary (short explanation) of what happened to you and Tira on the evening you were surrounded by Veman and his friends.

Task 2: What do you think would have happened to you if Tira had not shown up? How does that make you feel? What might you have done differently?

Task 3: Okaparnis has seen an increase in crime, partly due to an increase in poverty. Do you think that crime and poverty are related? If so, how? If not, why not? And, if you feel comfortable sharing, what are a couple of experiences you have had involving poverty?

Task 4: Answer the following questions about the reading:

- 1) What did Tira want to show you?
- 2) Where are Tira's parents?
- 3) What is the first thing you saw when you woke up in the morning?
- 4) To where did Tira lure Veman and his friends?