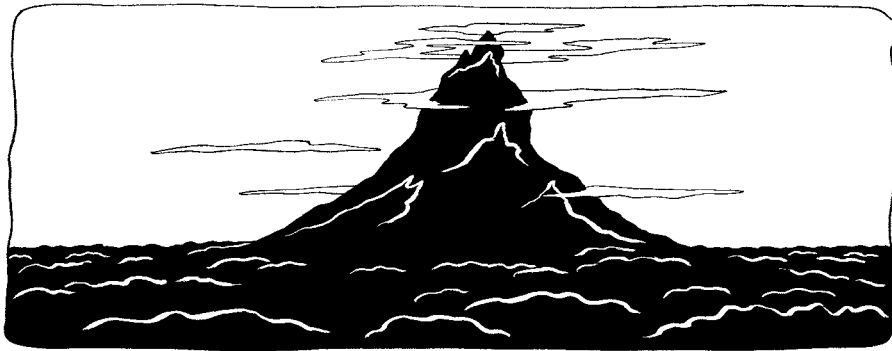


Adam's Alphabet

Sample chapters 1, 2 and 3

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1

Adam and Sofia were Twins unlike

Adam and Sofia were twins, born of the same mother and in the same hour. Sofia had wings, but Adam didn't. Adam had dark hair, thick and strong; Sofia had tresses of red-golden hair. Adam explored the earth and all that was on it; Sofia loved the wind and the word. They were as different as night and day, sun and moon or spring and fall in all their beauty.

Adam and Sofia spent most of their time together. If Adam went exploring, Sofia came along and climbed the trees that Adam climbed. And if Sofia wanted to listen to a tale told by the old woman under the village tree Adam listened too, and gladly. Sometimes Sofia opened her wings and flew in the air. Round and round she flew and Adam chased her until he was out of breath. Then she returned and they lay on the green grass laughing. Sometimes Adam found a cave and crawled into the depths. When he returned Sofia was waiting, practicing her word craft and beautiful writing. They chuckled at Adam's dirty clothes and dangerous adventures.

The twins lived on a mountain. It was majestic and tall—so tall that the peak was bare rock thrusting upwards and the ice and snow never melted in summer. Below the peak grew forests of fir, pine and spruce. High meadows lay on the mountain's flanks and were

used for grazing cattle and sheep. Brooks tumbled down the slopes—they rushed past the farms, the people and the village where Adam and Sofia lived.

All about the mountain lay a dark green forest as far as the eye could see. Even if Adam climbed to the highest rocky peak he could see nothing but a sea of trees. Even if Sofia flew as high as the clouds she saw nothing but the trees spread out over the world.

One day their parents had to go away. They left Adam and Sofia and told them never to leave the mountain.

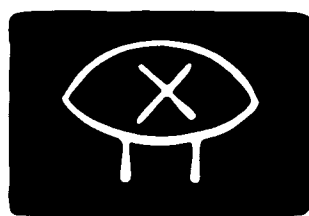
“Promise me you won’t leave the mountain,” said their father.

“I promise I won’t leave the mountain,” said Adam.

“With all my heart,” said Sofia, and closed her wings.

“Good,” said their mother. “We won’t be long,” and she kissed their cheeks.

That was the last Adam saw of them.



2

Adam spoke once.

Now he is silent.

He lost his word.

Let’s go into the forest,” said Adam.

“We can’t,” said Sofia. “We promised.”

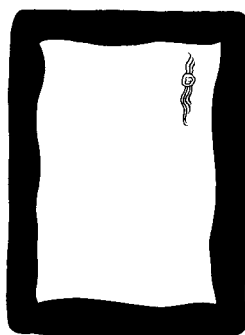
“Just a little way,” said Adam. “We’ve never been before.”

“We gave our word,” said Sofia.

Adam had the word. He spoke. For as long as he could remember he could speak. He was born of the word and the word flowed through him like life. He and Sofia had spoken forever it seemed, and he loved words and tales almost as much as she. He knew that speaking was important—but how important he did not know until he broke his word.

“Keep your word,” his father told him one day, his deep brown eyes serious and stern. “Don’t break it.”

Adam gave his word and broke it. He went into the forest when Sofia was playing. It wasn’t far, only by a few trees. The mountain was behind him—he was sure of that. How could he get lost? But he did and the mountain was not to be found. He climbed trees, many trees, all the way to the top, but the mountain was not to be seen. He opened his mouth to cry out, but his voice was gone. Adam had lost his word.



3

Sofia's Letter

Adam sat beside a tree. It was night and he was scared. The forest was alive with animals. He couldn't see them. He was afraid. As they passed their feet crunched dead leaves and snapped twigs. A branch broke close to him. More than once Adam opened his mouth to shout, but nothing came out. Only silence.

In the morning Adam climbed the tallest tree. The wind was blowing and the branches swayed. The leaves rustled and a few birds sang. Soon he was in the light and looking about. There was no mountain. He turned around in a complete circle just to make sure, but there was still no mountain.

"How can this be?" thought Adam. "It cannot be so."

But it was.

He thought of Sofia, He wanted to cry out her name at the top of his lungs. He opened his mouth to shout but there was only the wind and the trees and the endless sea of dark green leaves.

For three days Adam wandered the forest. He found food; he knew which roots to dig and which berries to pluck. He didn't kill animals but knew he might have to. Fitfully he slept on the ground. Now and then he dreamed. On the fourth day Adam climbed a tree for the last time. He had climbed so many and the mountain was never there. He knew for sure that the mountain wouldn't be there. Still, he climbed a tree. It was morning and a fine mist lay over the forest. The sun had a halo of gold and there was no wind. Far above his head a bird soared. It appeared and disappeared in the stands of mist.

"A white eagle," thought Adam. "How beautiful."

Then he recognized her. It was Sofia, flying. Adam shouted soundlessly. He waved an arm. He broke a branch and waved that instead. He tore off his white shirt and waved.

"Adam ... Adam," called Sofia. "Adam ... Adam."

Her voice seemed far away. She drew near and Adam waved frantically. She swooped low. She came close. She must see him ... but she didn't. She circled over his head. She was only a treetop away and still she did not see him. Suddenly Adam realized that he couldn't be seen. Either that or Sofia was a dream. She flew upwards again.

“Adam!” she cried. “Adam!” and she threw a piece of paper into the air. It fluttered like a bird. It soared and sank. Adam followed it with hungry eyes. It fell into the forest and he marked the place carefully. When he looked up Sofia was gone and only the mist moved about him.

Adam climbed down the tree and went looking for the paper. All morning he searched high and low. He had marked the place but doubted himself. The forest wasn't the same from below as above. He searched the treetops, he searched the branches and shrubs, he searched the forest floor. Finally he found it caught on a thorn in a briar patch. It cost him blood but he fetched it.

The paper was white and blank. There was nothing on it except a lock of red-golden hair fixed to the page with sealing wax. Adam stared at the paper for a long time. He turned it over and over, looking for something he'd missed. He stroked the hair and placed it against his cheek. It was Sofia's. Only her hair had such a red-golden sheen.