

Rassula and the Telepathic Dog

The snow fell harder and the wind grew colder and fiercer. As Rassula struggled in the blizzard, she began to do something she rarely did: worry. Normally, she sensed bad weather before it happened and found a safe, comfortable shelter where she could wait out storms. This time her intuition had failed her and she couldn't figure out where the storm had come from.

There was little daylight left and soon there would be no way to search for shelter. She considered looking for fallen pine boughs she could pile together to make a crude dome she could hide under. Heat was no problem. Except to cook, Rassula rarely needed a fire. As long as her clothes stayed dry, she could regulate her body temperature and keep herself warm. Right now, she was growing wetter and feeling more desperate every moment.

Rassula started to sing a dark ditty she made up on the spot. 'This is the way Rassula ends; this is the way Rassula ends; this is the way Rassula ends; not as a flash, but an ice cube!'

Rassula didn't want to end.

"Help me," a weak voice said. Surprised, Rassula paused to listen. The plea repeated. It took her a moment to realize she hadn't *heard* it. It was inside her head. *Please. I'm caught in a rabbit snare but I'm not a rabbit. Help me!* Rassula didn't know what to do. The trapped creature went on pleading and Rassula pondered how she could respond.

"Where are you?" she said aloud.

I'm nearby. I can hear you crunching through the snow. Please hurry. I will freeze to death before I can free myself. I hate to bother you, but there's no other choice.

Rassula sharpened her senses. She couldn't feel the creature's presence anywhere nearby. "Guide me, please," she said.

I am just off the road. Turn left and go through the brush. I will listen for your footsteps and direct you. Rassula did as the creature asked, walked a short distance, and saw a dog suspended in a snare dangling above the ground. *You found me. Hurry. Get me down and we can find shelter.*

She cut the dog down. It fell hard on the snow and struggled to stand. Trying to walk, it nearly fell from stiff joints caused by the extreme cold. Finally, it turned and waited for help. Rassula placed her hands over the dog's rear flanks and warmed them. It shook off the accumulated snow and started to walk slowly away. She hoped it wouldn't try to start running because she would never be able to keep up.

The dog led her deeper into the woods to a cave near a frozen stream. The cave was just big enough for them to go inside and shelter away from the opening. Even if snow blew in, they would not get wet.

Rassula put down her bag and sat against the wall. She crossed her legs and told the dog to lie on her lap. Puzzled, it did. She warmed them both. *Oh, that's wonderful. You must teach me to do that sometime,* it said in her mind.

"I will, if you teach me to do what you do," Rassula replied, aloud. She found it less disconcerting to talk to the dog instead of just thinking.

What's that?

“Talk in my head”

You already know how to do it. If you didn't, I wouldn't have been able to summon you.

“It's never happened before.”

Oh, you were a virgin? I run into those from time to time. I hope your first time didn't hurt too much.

Rassula laughed. “It didn't hurt at all. In fact, it was nice. I've never had anyone else inside my head before. What else can you do?”

She could have sworn the dog smiled at her. *We've only just met. I can't share all my secrets with you on the first date, can I?*

Rassula laughed again. “No. I can wait. Tell me about yourself.”

Give me some dinner first. You have food in that bag, yes?

“I do, but I'm not sure I'm carrying anything you would like.”

Honey, there isn't any food I don't like. I'm a cheap date.

Rassula rummaged around in her bag as the dog basked in the heat of her body. It would have fallen asleep if it hadn't felt so hungry. “Oh, here's something I'm sure you'll like. I have some meat left.”

And you'll share it with me, of course? You're too kind.

“I'm trying to impress you on our first date. It won't be like this always, I promise.”

I think I'm in love with you already. But I'm a dog, and that's what's supposed to happen.

Rassula ignored the dog's sarcastic comment. “I gather whatever food I can whenever it's available. I never know what I will find.” She unwrapped the meat and put it in front of the dog's mouth.

Just give me a little. Eat some yourself. You'll need the energy to get you through this long storm.

“Really? How do you know?”

I feel it in my bones. It's been coming for days and is gonna last for days, but we're safe here. No other animals should come around. And if they do... well, I'll protect you.

“No need,” Rassula replied. “I'll protect myself. Animals don't frighten me. They know I am their friend.”

All right, then you can protect me. Deal?

“Deal!”

Just as the dog predicted, the blizzard continued for two days. Snow blocked the cave entrance and they couldn't have left if they wanted to. Rassula had enough food to share. She always carried a week's worth, at least.

She melted snow in a small bowl and they drank whenever they were thirsty. They passed the time telling each other stories about their travels. Rassula thought her wanderings were unusual, but the dog's adventures were truly bizarre. She wondered if it embellished them.

Watch it, it said in her head. I can read your thoughts, too, you know. Every last damn word is true. I swear on my mother's litters. All of them.

“I'll thank you to be more discreet about what's inside my head. We hardly know each other.”

Too late. I like it in there. I'm staying awhile. Got any more of that meat?

"A little, but I want information first."

What haven't you learned about me yet?

"You haven't told me your name."

Oh. My name. Let me think. What human names have I used? Oh, I know, what's dog spelled backward?

"Uh, God."

Works for me.

"You're sure?" Rassula asked, wryly.

It's as good a name as any.

"It might offend some people."

Oh, that's not my real name, just the one you can use. I never share my real name.

"Very well, the answer *is no*. I'm not calling you God. I will call you Dog. You want the last of the meat?"

Is that an offering?

"Get over yourself, or I'll eat it *all*. It's just food."

Good. I'm not really a god. That was a test. I never could be or would want to be. Gods are crazy. Or, I should say, they make humans crazy.

"I agree. So why choose that name, then?"

Because it's kinky, in a way.

Rassula laughed. "It's not kinky at *all*, but you can call *yourself* whatever you want. To me, you're still just Dog. Take it or leave it."

About that meat...

"Oh, here. Enjoy," Rassula said. She handed it the last morsels. Dog ate the food hungrily, smacked its lips afterward, and then curled up and went to sleep, content. *To me, you're just a dog, but I like you, and I'm glad we met*, she thought, feeling more comfortable with Dog. It farted in its sleep and Rassula laughed. *Well put*, she thought, and then she, too, fell asleep.

After the blizzard ended, the sun came out, the air warmed and the snow began melting fast. Rassula packed her bag and they prepared to leave the cave.

"So, Dog, were you headed anywhere when that trap caught you?" Rassula asked.

Yes. I was hoping to make it to the next town before the storm hit.

"Why the town?"

My friend Melvin summoned me, Dog replied.

"How do you mean that, summoned?"

The same way I summoned you.

"You mean we don't have to be close to communicate?"

No. Distance isn't a factor, Rassula. Receptivity is.

"So, who's Melvin?"

He's a strange guy who thinks he's a wizard or wants to be, at least. He asks people to call him Merlin. Most refuse. But he's harmless. He wants my help with something he's working on. He's helped me a few times, so I owe him a favor. Wanna come with me? I think you'd like him.

Rassula nodded. “Yeah. I don’t have anything better to do. Why don’t we leave? I’m stiff from all that sitting and need to walk.”

Me, too. And I need to take a dump; a big one.

Rassula grinned. “Thanks for sharing. Do it where I can’t be a witness.”

All right. But I bet you need to take one, too. I promise not to look.

Dog was right. On their walk downhill from the cave they separated briefly, relieved themselves, and then met at the bottom.

Later, on the snow-covered road, they saw a woman walking toward them. “Your little dog’s really cute,” the woman said. *Little?* Rassula thought. *He’s huge.* “The way it follows you,” the woman added. “It’s so well-behaved.”

“Oh, he’s very smart. Also, he knows where his food comes from, so he’s not gonna let me out of his sight.”

“He? But she’s a girl.”

“Oh, really?”

“Yeah.” The woman looked at Rassula as if she was an idiot for not knowing her little dog was a female and then walked away.

“Really cute?” Rassula asked after the woman passed.

Yes. She saw me as a little dog today.

“But, I can see you and you’re big.”

Only to you, Rassula. I control how humans see me.

“Maybe you can teach me that trick, too.”

I would if I could, but I don’t know how I do it. It just happens instinctively. It’s a handy trick when I get into... mischief.

“I bet it is. So, are you doing it right now? Am I seeing you as you actually are?”

I’d rather not say.

“Be that way,” Rassula replied, smiling.

Dog led Rassula to his friend Melvin’s house. Melvin had bought an old book from an itinerant bookseller who told him it might contain real magical spells. The problem was that Melvin couldn’t read or translate anything he found in the book. He wanted to use Dog’s telepathic powers to link their minds. Melvin believed that ‘two heads are better than one.’ His plan was to read the words aloud to see what, if any, images came up in their minds. Perhaps they could figure out what the words meant and decide which spells were safe to try, and what others they ought to avoid. Rassula agreed to help since she and Dog were now also connected telepathically.

“Wonderful. *Three* heads are even better than two,” Melvin replied, enthusiastically.

Melvin opened the book to the first spell. “Are we ready?” he asked, solemnly. *Yes,* Dog and Rassula replied. “I’m going to slowly read the words out loud. If the words mean anything, we might get images in our minds. If the words are gibberish, then I’ve been cheated.”

Wouldn’t be the first time, I’ll bet, Dog thought. Rassula grinned. Melvin pretended he hadn’t heard.

The words in the magic book were written in an alphabet that looked vaguely familiar. There were no unusual letters or unfamiliar characters; however, the combinations of letters that formed each word were meaningless. Since magic often involves incantation,

Melvin assumed he would have to try saying them aloud before he could understand what they meant. However, he didn't want to do it alone. He felt safer with assistance. He also felt they would be able to help if he got himself into trouble.

Melvin had already read the first spell several times but nothing had happened. Now, he read the first word of the first spell silently and broke it down into syllables so he could figure out how to pronounce it. It didn't seem difficult to say. He looked ahead at the next few words. Despite their unfamiliarity, they also seemed easy to say aloud. He rehearsed the phrase in his mind. Rassula and Dog waited patiently.

Rassula didn't mind experiments. She had performed many by herself and also helped others do them. Dog didn't like that nothing was happening. If somebody was going to do something, it had to happen *now*, before Dog got bored, impatient, and irritable. Melvin was taking his time, and Dog got tired of waiting. *Get on with it or I'm gonna take a nap*, Dog complained.

"All right. Here goes. Kula - matacka - wanta - buo - nemen - jaknt - dulent - mofung." Melvin stopped reading so he could examine his mind. Was an image forming there? He saw nothing. *Dog?* he thought.

I got nothing. Wanna do it again?

Rassula? Melvin thought. She didn't reply. *Rassula?* Melvin looked up from the book. Dog looked over at Rassula. She had slumped down in her chair, her head thrown back, her eyes rolled back in her head. *Shit! What did you do to her, Melvin, you idiot!*

"I didn't do anything!" Melvin cried. He went to her, grabbed her arms, and tried to pull her up. Her body seemed lifeless. "Rassula! Are you all right?"

What happened to her? Dog asked, alarmed.

"I think she's in a trance."

Because of the spell? Dog asked.

"I guess so. Maybe that's what it does."

Well, get her out!

"I don't know how. Maybe there's another spell that does that. I'll try-."

No! You won't try anything else. That book is obviously dangerous. Leave her for now. We'll wait. Maybe she'll come out of it on her own.

It was as if Rassula had unknowingly stepped across a barrier between the seasons. One moment she was walking along a pleasant road on a sunny spring afternoon, the next moment she found herself enveloped in a fierce deep winter snowstorm. She stopped and turned. The pleasant spring was gone and she saw nothing but blizzard behind her. *What the hell just happened?* she thought. *Maybe I'd better find a place to wait out this storm.*

Rassula kept walking but couldn't see any place she could take shelter. Not only had the seasons changed abruptly, but the sun had moved suddenly and was already going down. She could freeze to death during a cold, wet night if her clothing became soaked. Despite her ability to heat her body, she couldn't keep her clothing dry.

She started looking for fallen evergreen boughs she could pile into a dome to protect her but the snow blanketed everything. If boughs were on the ground, she would never find them. Rassula began to panic.

Help me, a voice said. Startled, Rassula stopped and listened. With the howling wind and swirling snowflakes, the sound could have come from anywhere. *Help me, please*, the voice said again. Rassula could not determine where it came from. She was reluctant to leave the road because she would have to trudge along the uneven forest floor. If she tripped over undergrowth or logs, she might fall, injure herself, and not be able to get up. Rassula's panic grew worse. This could be the end of Rassula, and she knew it.

You're so close. Please help me.

Where is that voice coming from? Rassula thought.

My voice is inside your head. I'm nearby. Help me!

"Where are you?" Rassula said aloud.

Up the hill. I'm under a tree, trapped in a rabbit snare; but I'm not a rabbit. Please free me before I freeze to death.

Rassula turned, left the road, and started climbing the hill. *Guide me.*

Keep walking. You should see me in a moment.

Rassula spotted a large dog suspended above the ground by its hind legs. "Yes! There you are."

Cut me down! Hurry. Rassula drew out her knife and quickly cut the wet rope. The dog fell to the ground and Rassula worried it might be injured.

"Are you all right?" she asked.

Just stiff. I've been there a while.

"Can you walk? You're too big for me to carry."

I think so. Let me try. The dog got up and then stumbled stiffly in a circle. *That feels better. Blood's starting to come back. Follow me. I know a cave.*

Rassula followed the dog up the hill to a small cave. They arrived just as the last of the light faded. *It will keep us dry. But there's nothing to make a fire with. You do know how to do that, right?*

"Uh, yes, but I don't use fires except to cook food and I won't need to do any cooking for a few days." She set her pack down and sat against the back wall. Snow blew in the cave opening but it probably wouldn't pile up much. "This is a good place to wait out the storm. Thanks."

Thank you.

Rassula sat with her legs outstretched and asked the dog to lie on her them. *Why?* it asked.

"You'll see." The dog reclined on her legs and felt soothing warmth from Rassula's body.

Oh! Ooohhh! I need this! the dog thought. Rassula smiled and knew they would be all right for as long as the storm lasted.

Three days later, the storm ended, the sun came out, and it was safe to leave. "So who's this friend you're going to see?" Rassula asked.

He's a weird but harmless old guy who fancies himself a wizard, but he's just a bad magician who likes to think he can dazzle people. He calls himself Merlin. But his real name is Melvin.

"Why are you going to see him?"

He summoned me.

“How?”

Same way I summoned you. It works over vast distances.

Melvin’s house was on a quiet street near the edge of the little town. It was set back from the street behind shrubs and bushes that looked neglected and unkempt. The interior of Melvin’s house looked the same. As did Melvin, but he had a big smile and eyes that sparkled and Rassula liked him immediately. He seemed awkward with her, however. She assumed he was shy around women.

Melvin welcomed them with a small meal he had obviously not gone to much trouble to prepare. The bread was almost stale, the cheese had been around awhile, and the tea tasted weird but not unpleasant. Dog enjoyed the biscuits. Grateful to be out of the cave, they ate heartily.

Melvin didn’t say much during the meal and Dog wondered why Melvin had summoned him. He didn’t want to ask right away because Melvin could be intense and single-minded when discussing one of his obsessions. *He might bore Rassula right out of her mind*, Dog thought, to himself. Melvin was so pleased by the company that he didn’t want to jump right to the reason he summoned Dog. He was also curious about Rassula.

After they ate, Melvin took them into another room where he kept his magical trinkets and doodads. He showed them a book he’d bought that was supposed to contain magic spells. Opening the book, he said the first couple of words in the spell aloud but Rassula interrupted him. “Wait! Don’t read it aloud! I *know* those words.” Dog wondered why she interrupted Melvin.

“Great!” Melvin said, hoping they had already made some progress. “You mean you can translate them?”

“No, I don’t know this language, but I’ve heard them before. My sense is you shouldn’t speak them aloud.”

“Why not?”

“They’re dangerous,” Rassula replied. “*Very* dangerous.”

“How do you know, if you don’t know what they mean?” Melvin asked.

“Trust me. We must not go on.”

“All right, let’s try another one.”

“No!” Rassula said. “This is only the first spell in the book. You would think it would be mild and they would progress to more powerful ones. But I sense this is a potent one, and I fear the ones that come after are *much* worse.” She paused and looked at Melvin.

“But, but,” he protested.

“We must *destroy* this book, immediately,” Rassula declared.

“No! I gave everything I had to buy it! You can’t destroy it. I won’t let you.”

“It will destroy *you* if you try anything else. Now put it away and go to sleep. We’ll discuss it in the morning.” Melvin did not reply. Rassula closed the book and put it on a high shelf. Then she went to bed.

She awoke to dim light and strange noises. *Must be a storm*, she thought. Rassula dressed so she could go down to Melvin’s study. The aroma of delicious food wafted up the stairs as soon as she opened her bedroom door. *Melvin must have hired a cook*, she thought, *a really good one*. She reached the bottom of the steps and the smells became overpowering. As she reached the door of Melvin’s study, Rassula felt ravenous.

What she saw when she opened that door astonished her.

The study was transformed. Melvin sat in a pool of gold coins, surrounded by rich food stacked on the fanciest plates Rassula had ever seen. He was laughing. "Great, you're up. Come and enjoy."

"Melvin, where did all this come from? You tried *other* spells, didn't you? I told you not to."

"You were wrong! It's perfectly safe. Look what I got. I'm rich. There's more food in this room right now than I've had in my house all year. It's delicious, too. Best I've ever eaten. Come and have some lunch."

"But it's early. I don't think I got much sleep."

"It's nearly noon."

"Really? It's so dark out."

"Yes. A storm's coming, I think. You can tell by the sound."

Rassula listened and heard wind, rain, thunder, and something else. "What is that?" she asked.

"Just a storm, like I said."

"No, there's another sound," Rassula said. "I know, it's howling! Dogs; or *wolves*."

"Oh, yeah. I did notice them earlier. Wonder where they came from?"

"Maybe where all *this* came from!" Rassula replied angrily and then walked to the large window to look out. It was dim and heavy rain fell but she could make out bodies on the ground. "Melvin, did you see this?"

"What?"

"Something's happened to the people. I think they're all dead."

"No! It's probably just the storm," Melvin said.

"It's not the storm. It's that damn book. Now I know it *has* to be destroyed. Give it to me."

"Never. This is only the beginning! There's so much more I want!"

"*You* want? Where do you think everything comes from? Everything you have here was taken from others. Their money, their food, their *lives*, Melvin! You can't use the book anymore. You'll destroy the whole world."

"I don't believe it. You're exaggerating. Those people out there have nothing to do with me."

"Your book did something to them, Melvin. Give it to me!"

"No! Never. Not in a million years. It's mine!" Rassula grasped the book as Melvin tried to pull it away from her.

"It goes in the stove!"

"No!" Melvin shrieked. But he was no longer Melvin or Merlin. Rassula now struggled with a huge demon from hell. It overpowered her and wrested the book out of her hands.

"Please, Melvin. If you have a shred of humanity left, you've got to let me destroy that book."

"You're too late," the demon replied in a deep chilling voice. "That won't change *anything*. The power of the book is mine, and I won't give it up as long as I live." As soon as demon Melvin said it, Rassula knew he was challenging her to kill him and she knew she

could not. That was not what Rassula did, ever. She pondered other actions as rapidly as her thoughts could form and hit on a solution only she could achieve.

Calmly, she said, "All right, Melvin. Enjoy what you have." He no longer sensed she was a threat and turned his attention to devouring food and running coins through his fingers. Rassula sat down and watched him. Dog was nowhere around; she wondered what had happened to him. Perhaps he was outside howling. She hoped he was all right.

Rassula waited until Melvin became drowsy from gorging himself and fell asleep. She could tell when he began dreaming and then entered his dream so she could take control of him. When he awoke after a short, fitful nap, she asked him to give her the book. He obediently did. Then she walked over to the stove and threw it in. She expected the coins and food to vanish along with the storm and the howling but nothing changed.

"Thought you could fool me, didn't you?" demon Melvin said, triumphantly. "But I fooled *you*. I don't need the book anymore. All the spells are up *here* now," he pointed to his head. "All I have to do is recite them from memory."

"What... how?"

"One of them I read transferred the contents of the book to my brain. *I'm* the book now, Rassula. You can't do anything about it. You can leave if you want to. I won't keep you here. I don't need you. I have all I need; power beyond my wildest dreams."

"Oh, Melvin, what have you done?"

And, Rassula wondered, what could *she* do about what he had done?

As Rassula followed the dog, she wondered if the cave would be large enough for a human as well as an animal. If it wasn't, her life in this world would likely end tonight. It was almost dark, and the hope of finding another shelter would soon vanish. She would not survive being outside in this fierce storm.

The dog had chosen well. The cave was deep enough for an entire family of humans. The pair huddled on the back wall away from the wind and blowing snow. Rassula and Dog settled in for what (it told her) would be a long storm.

Rassula stopped worrying, shared some food with Dog, and tried her best to make them both comfortable. Her bodily warmth was all it craved, and Dog fell asleep soon after they ate. Rassula sat awake listening to the storm. She wondered if the world was ending in a colossal blizzard, if a new ice age was starting, and why she hadn't heard or sensed anything beforehand.

If she had any warning, she would have traveled south instead of north. *But it's springtime*, she thought. *It's supposed to get warmer as the days lengthen. Maybe this will be bad for a while but then it will warm up fast when it's done and all the snow will melt fast. I only have a week's worth of food.* Rassula started worrying again but soon fell asleep, exhausted.

Dog's friend Melvin showed them the book. He opened it to the first spell and Rassula read it, silently. "We can't do this," she declared.

"*What?* Well, why not?"

“I’ve seen this before. It’s not safe. In fact, it might be very dangerous.”

“There’s always some risk with something like this,” Melvin said. “How else are we going to learn if we don’t try?”

“Trust me, Melvin. You don’t *want* to try. You want to get rid of this book.”

“Get rid of it? I’ve been looking for a book like this for years. It’s the answer to all my dreams.”

“It will bring you nightmares you cannot imagine. Get rid of it! Fire would be the best way.”

“Burn it?! *No!*” Melvin closed the book hastily, grabbed it from the podium, and held it close to his chest protectively.

“Melvin, you must *not* use the book. I’m warning you.”

“I don’t believe you. If you won’t help, at least Dog is here. He’s my friend, not you. He’ll help me.” Rassula turned to look at Dog. *Please help me convince him, she pleaded. He doesn’t know what he’s doing.*

I trust Rassula, Dog thought, although I haven’t known her long. She saved me from the blizzard. If she says the book is dangerous, I’m willing to believe her.

Dog went up to Melvin. *Give her the book, Melvin, Dog commanded. Melvin clutched it tighter. Melvin? Do I have to threaten you?*

Melvin would not yield. He tried to leave his study. Dog blocked the door and growled at him. Rassula didn’t know how Melvin saw Dog. She hoped it was as a large ferocious canine whose sharp teeth would stop Melvin in his tracks. Melvin did not want to provoke his friend. He stopped moving but held on to the book.

Rassula came up behind him. She stepped between Melvin and Dog and reached for the book. Melvin allowed her to take it. Rassula then left the room with the book and went to bed. She would keep the book close until she could leave tomorrow morning and take it far away. Some instinct told her burning it was not the answer. She thought burying or hiding it in a remote place would be safer.

As soon as Rassula left, Dog saw no need to watch Melvin anymore. Thanks to Rassula, the crisis was over. Dog was glad he’d met her and they had saved Melvin from doing something incredibly stupid and destructive. He went to a warm corner, lay down, and fell asleep.

However, Melvin hadn’t finished yet. He yawned a couple of times and waited until Dog was asleep and then pretended he was going to bed. He quietly opened the study door and crept out of the room. After locking the door so Dog could not follow him, he went to the stairway. Melvin tiptoed upstairs and walked stealthily toward Rassula’s room. *She should be in a deep sleep by now, he thought. If I move quietly, and fast, I should be able to get the book and lock the door afterward.*

Melvin opened the door slowly and then crept into the dark bedroom. He assumed Rassula would have the book close to her and walked over to the bed. Rassula wasn’t in it. He looked around to see if she was somewhere else in the room but it seemed empty. Melvin lit a candle and looked again. Rassula was gone. So was her bag. She had tricked him and stolen his chance to wield powerful magic and transform himself into a real wizard. Melvin cursed Rassula and Dog, then sat on the bed and sobbed. He would never be Merlin, now. He would always just be Melvin.

The bright sun streaming into the cave woke Rassula. She yawned and stretched. Her body felt stiff from being there overnight. She was happy the storm was over and the sun was already melting the snow. She could probably make it down the hill soon and back to the road but was in no hurry.

She finished waking herself up and then prepared to leave. Her long, bizarre dream popped back into her head. It featured a telepathic dog who had rescued her from certain death in a fierce blizzard. The dream also featured the dog's inept magician friend, a dangerous book of spells, and several attempts to keep the magician from invoking any of the spells. Rassula wondered where such a silly dream had come from. The only real thing was the snowstorm, and that was far worse in the dream than in reality. Rassula laughed at herself.

She picked up her bag so she could find some breakfast. It felt heavier than the last time she'd moved it. She wondered if it had somehow gotten wet and worried her food was now ruined. Rassula reached into the bag and felt a large object she couldn't recall putting there. *What's this?* she thought as she pulled it out. It was a heavy, dark-bound volume. *Where did this come from?*

Rassula opened the book and turned a few pages. She recognized the writing on one page and realized she had seen it in her weird dream. Suddenly she suspected it might not have been a dream at all, but didn't know what it actually was. Was the world outside still the same? Rassula wondered if she wanted to find out but knew she had to leave soon because she was running out of food.

What do I do with this book? She asked herself. *Take it with me, or bury it here in this cave? If it's the book from the dream, it should not be in the world. Maybe the purpose of the dream was for me get rid of it.*

Rassula found a cleft in the rocks big enough to hide the book. She covered it with several sizeable rocks so no human could discover it and no animal could dig it out. Then she left the cave and resumed her journey, hoping the world was safe from the dangerous book, forever.

Thus ended the tale of Rassula and the Telepathic Dog