WHERE IS TANIS?

You wake up, alone, and walk out into the dark forest. You're up before the others, as always. The way is hard. The way is dark. You wait. You listen, but there are still signs of life in the woods. You know, when you're close, these sounds will fade and finally stop.

You wash in the river. You wonder if today the sun will break through the thick gray canopy of cloud. Sometimes you feel like you're close, you stop and listen, but...not yet.

You tie your ribbons to the trees so you don't lose the way, just like your uncle taught you, but today you feel the fog, a thick cloud filling your mind with noise. You know it's only going to get worse.

The Seekers are rising. It's time to get started. You look up into the sky, take a deep breath, and head back to camp.

Your Uncle told you that the Runner knows the way, or will remember the way, but first the Runner must find the map. Then, and only then, can the search begin.

The last Runner to locate Tanis had been young, but strong. He was also trained by your uncle, who had been trained by his father before him, and so it has been and so it shall be. Now it's your turn. You're the Runner. You know the last was almost killed. You will come to understand that this is common. Even the most experienced Runner risks losing his life every time he steps onto the path.

Tanis is eternal, forever, but it's only existed here, in these woods, for a relatively short time, most likely less than two hundred years, but nobody knows for sure. Tanis is always moving, or you're moving, and it's always changing, or you're changing.

Once, the last Runner told you that he remembered something, which is very rare. He told you that he led his Seekers through the deep evergreens, toward the sound that only the Runner can hear, the constant throb and hum of what they call “the Calm”, the beating heart of Tanis. His Seekers came out of the woods into a clearing and the Runner, who was looking at the red rock, knew, that if he turned back around, the calm was now behind him.

The quest was over for his group of Seekers. In “The Calm,” time stops, or slows, or disappears altogether. You know that the Runner never enters “The Calm.” You know that the Runner brings those who are looking, the Seekers. You know that the Seekers, and only the Seekers may enter “The Calm.” In Tanis, if they're lucky, your seekers dreams can become reality. If they're not, the Seeker enters a nightmare world, an unimaginable hell of their own creation.
Your father had a saying he taught to your Uncle once, a long time ago. So as it was. So shall it be in Tanis, eternal, in Tanis they'll see.

You guide your Seekers down the long path, the path along the river. There are less signs of life here. You suddenly realize that haven’t heard the birds for a long time. This is a good sign. You’re getting close. You close your eyes and imagine “The Calm.”

You think back to finding the map. It wasn’t as hard this time. This group of Seekers was different, stronger somehow. The map was strong within them, which means it is strong within you.

You hear it. Finally. The familiar song. You’ve only heard it once before, with your Uncle, but it’s a sound you never forget. You know that when the hum and throb of Tanis meets the hum and throb in your mind, the Red Rock is close.

You lead your Seekers over a fallen log, past large fallen cedars into a clearing. The sound is deafening. Your Seekers are staring. They don’t understand. But they will. You turn. They turn...

And everything changes.