

Seek the Truth: Unraveling Frozen II

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Preface

Ever since I fell in love with the original *Frozen* in early 2014, a day never went by where I didn't dream about all the potential stories and scenarios that could unfold in a possible sequel. Questions about how Anna and Elsa are now getting to know each other as sisters and how Elsa is dealing with her lingering guilt, filled my mind during my many years of waiting and pondering about *Frozen II*. Of course, there were plenty of official post-movie stories available through books and comics, but as most fans will agree, anything not produced by Walt Disney Animation Studios itself doesn't seem canon and real enough to satisfy. We did get the animated shorts *Frozen Fever* and *Olaf's Frozen Adventure* that offered enjoyable glimpses into the lives of the characters post-movie, but only a big-budget, feature-length film would have the time and resources to offer the same kind of quality storytelling and level of emotion that made the first movie resonate all around the world. When *Frozen II* was officially announced in 2017, I couldn't wait to see what new adventures and emotional hurdles our beloved sisters would face in the next chapter of their saga.

And now, here we are, over six months after *Frozen II* was finally released to the world. Between multiple visits to the theater as well as home video viewings, I've seen the movie about 13 times. I've perused numerous social media posts these past several months, including Twitter, Tumblr, Facebook, and Discord, eager to share my thoughts about the movie with others and to see what they think as well. And I finally feel like I've gathered enough feedback from fans and non-fans alike to say that the overall consensus about *Frozen II* is...mixed. I've seen plenty of people praising it as a worthy sequel and an even better movie than the first, while plenty of others didn't think it was good, especially in terms of the ending and overall narrative flow. Despite the anxiety and uncertainty that occurred before the movie's release (thanks to leaked spoilers), I ended up loving it even

though the premise was something completely different from any of the headcanons I had cultivated over the years...out of my many questions I hoped that the movie would answer, why Elsa has powers, was not one of them. Naturally I wrote a few posts on my blog discussing my interpretation of events in the movie, including a very long analysis of the lore as well as a general review. But as I read posts and comments by other fans online about their criticisms and confusion surrounding *Frozen II*, I realized that I wanted to address it – all of it.

Perhaps it's because I've been a fan of many anime and game series over the years that have plots and lore way vaguer and more ambiguous than this. I've spent many hours of my life vehemently writing my interpretations and found that I enjoy the satisfaction when it all comes together in the end even though it seemed non-sensual at first. Some may say "if you need to write a 50-page essay explaining a story, doesn't that prove it doesn't make sense?" To that I say, haven't so many of fiction's greatest works invoked tons of analysis and theories, even long after their inception? This applies to fiction all across the ages, from the centuries' old works of Shakespeare that people are still debating to this day, to one of my favorite games series, *Dark Souls*, which has existed for a few years now and fans are still churning out detailed content and discovering new secrets about its massive lore. Should these works be dismissed as "bad" because simple explanations can't be had by just one or even two exposures? Just because concrete answers are hard to find doesn't mean they're not there, and if a work requires a certain level of imagination and self-interpretation to appreciate, that should not be strikes against it, whether it's an avant-garde indie film, an 18th century play, or a Disney movie.

And that's what I intend to do with this project. I'm no longer satisfied with making a little post here and a comment there about one or two *Frozen II* topics like I've been doing. I wanted to make a comprehensive, all-encompassing book that fully conveys how I interpret everything in *Frozen II*, from the lore and plot to the character motivations and story progression, laid out in the chronology of its concepts and events. My hope is to show that *Frozen II* is not as messy and contradicting as others think, but does in fact make a lot of sense and culminates into a great story about self-fulfillment and doing what is right against all odds. I'm not assuming I will change any minds, but if even one person who reads this work of mine ends up with slightly more appreciation for *Frozen II* than they had before, I will be very grateful. I hope you'll enjoy following me on this journey into the unknown...and beyond.

Chapter 1 – Arendelle and the Northuldra

Frozen II begins with King Agnarr telling the story of his time in the enchanted forest before and during the battle between Arendelle and the Northuldra. One of the first important points of his tale is how he describes the Northuldra. He specifically notes that "they are not magical" and that they "only took advantage of the forest's gifts." The imagery we see during this scene reinforces that. We see the Northuldra leader "riding" the water to shore, the fire spirit's signature purple fire being used for cooking at the campsite, and rock formations moving on their own so reindeer can cross over a cliff. All of these phenomena directly relate to the four elemental spirits (more on them in Chapter 3), of which Agnarr states that they "protected" the forest. This all indicates that the spirits helped the Northuldra through aspects of their daily lives, making it easier for them



Fire spirit flames being used for cooking

to move about and live off the land. They had a peaceful coexistence that we can imagine went back to the beginning of Northuldra culture. This was life in the enchanted forest before the completion of the dam changed everything.

So what was King Runeard's motivations and ultimate plan regarding the dam? We plainly see in one of Ahtohallan's memories that he views the Northuldra as an untrustworthy bunch because they follow magic. Fear of those who are different, an emotion that eventually leads to hate, is not an uncommon one, especially for someone in a position of power like Runeard. Magic is an otherworldly entity, something he doesn't understand and can't control, and what's worse, it's in the hands of these "uncivilized" people. This is something he just can't leave alone. But rather than destroy the Northuldra, it's more likely he wanted to gain a hold over them so he could better keep the magic he feared in check. Evidence for this is another Ahtohallan memory where he tells one of his soldiers that "the dam will weaken their land, so they will have to turn to me" – they would implore his help when their resources are weakened, and when he does help, they'll be in his debt and he can better control and manipulate them and their magic to suit his desires. However, fearful of what magic could do if he tried to overtake the Northuldra by force, he decided to accomplish his plan in a more subtle way. Being an educated man, he knew the adverse effects a dam could have. Environmental impacts from dams is a real-world issue; among those effects is the erosion of downstream riverbeds due to sediment loss upstream and changes in

temperature and chemical composition caused by the ceasing of free-flowing water. All of this can be detrimental to ecosystems both in and around the water. He assumed the Northuldra wouldn't have this knowledge and he could construct the dam under the guise of it being a gift of peace.



The free-flowing river that ran through the forest before the dam existed

Constructing such a large dam is not a quick feat and requires a lot of planning and coordination, so it's very likely that Arendelle and the Northuldra had several meetings during and after its construction. For at least one of those meetings, the Northuldra even visited Arendelle, as we see during Agnarr's flashback. Agnarr states in his story that "their (the Northuldra) ways were so different from ours." Arendelle must have learned at least a little bit about Northuldra culture during this time, even if it was just in terms of how different their way of life was compared to Arendelle. They also took a liking to the Northuldra tales about the spirits, which I'll discuss later in the chapter. The fact that Agnarr would describe them as being so different hints at the prejudice towards the Northuldra that sprang up after the battle. The Arendelle citizens who managed to return from the forest after the battle were adamant that it must have been the Northuldra who started the fight, and whatever positive views the kingdom may have had of these "different" people was instantly tarnished. But despite this, Agnarr did not express any personal resentment towards the Northuldra during his story. Perhaps he wanted to keep the tale more whimsical and less political for the sake of his daughters, or perhaps he still had a lingering fascination for the Northuldra girl playing in the wind he saw during his visit.

When the dam was complete, King Runeard, along with his soldiers, were invited to the forest to celebrate. As we see in another Ahtohallan memory, Runeard brought many soldiers with him, fully intent on sizing up the Northuldra's strength should war

completely break out. During the visit, we see the Arendellians partaking in Northuldra activities like reindeer riding and mingling with the magic of the spirits. We even get our first indication that the spirits have a "fun" side, as the earth giants create a stone structure shaped



Reindeer statue created by earth spirit magic

like a reindeer that wouldn't serve any purpose besides being a creative way to welcome their guests. This was probably Agnarr's first visit to the forest, as he mentions in his story that he was so "honored to get to go to the forest to celebrate it." He looks very excited and also a tad nervous as he proudly stands next to his father when they arrive.

As the day goes by and he joins in the forest festivities, he notices Iduna off in the distance playing with Gale, the wind spirit. Intrigued, he tries to get a closer look at this mysterious girl, but then the war breaks out. As we discover later, Runeard had led the Northuldra leader to a secluded area where he attacked and killed him, sometime during the reindeer riding event. More Ahtohallan memories reveal that the Northuldra leader was starting to notice the negative effect the dam was having on their land. Construction of such a large dam, especially in this time period, probably took many months or even years (to prove his sincerity, perhaps Runeard insisted that no magic would be used to help during the construction). The Northuldra leader was gradually noticing adverse changes over time, perhaps the disappearance of fish species used for food or dying plant life near the water due to the eroding riverbeds. He expressed his concerns to Runeard on more than one occasion and Runeard began to fear that the perceptive leader could ruin his plan, so he made the decision to murder him in secret that day. After the treacherous deed was done, Runeard returned to the group and either lied to his soldiers, saying that the Northuldra were attacking them, or the other Northuldra citizens may have realized what he had done and then instigated the attack. Of course, they didn't survive the battle to reveal what had happened.



Reindeer riding (Runeard and the Northuldra leader are noticeably absent)

Regardless, each side was convinced that the other had betrayed them. The once peaceful forest became a chaotic battleground and the spirits, eager to rid their pure forest of this overwhelming violence, indiscriminately unleashed their magic on everyone. When

Agnarr is knocked unconscious during the fray, we find out later from the memories Elsa creates that it was Iduna who came to his aid. She used the "spirit call" (more on that in Chapter 2) to summon Gale, who carried him to safety onto an Arendelle cart. Agnarr could remember hearing



A memory in Ahtohallan showing Iduna hiding next to Agnarr in a cart

a voice and feeling the sense of being carried to safety, but was never able to see the face of his rescuer. Eager to escape the fighting herself, Iduna jumped into the cart with him, covering herself so the Arendellian soldiers who later leave with Agnarr wouldn't find out that she stowed away. Little did she know that she'd have no way of ever returning to her home again.

When the fighting didn't cease, the spirits made the decision to cut off the now hostile forest from the rest of the world by erecting a powerful, magical mist around its boundaries, preventing anyone from leaving or entering. One of Agnarr's concluding statements as he finishes his story is "I am told, the spirits then vanished..." Since the forest was now completely cut off, no one had any way of knowing that the spirits vanished or whatever else happened inside the forest. The spirits vanishing must have been an assumption made by the people of Arendelle, perhaps as a way of preventing any further interest in the magical forest amongst the citizens. But as we find out later, the spirits did not vanish, they simply lay dormant until Elsa's magic awoke them decades later.

The *Frozen II* virtual reality (VR) short, *Myth: A Frozen Tale*, that was released at select venues during the time of the movie's theatrical run (and is now available for purchase on the Oculus Rift system) provides an interesting look at the Arendellian interpretation of the spirits and their magic. Although my intention for this book is to only cite content from *Frozen II* itself, I feel that *Myth* is still a viable source to fill in gaps since it is an official production released by Disney, and *Frozen II* filmmakers Jennifer Lee, Chris Buck, and Peter Del Vecho served as creative advisors on the project. The story from *Myth* is read from a book by the mother of an Arendellian family, implying that Arendellians also had some knowledge of the spirits, enough so that it was transcribed into children's books. This knowledge started spreading when the Arendellians and Northuldra agreed to make peace and King Runeard was working on the dam's

construction. During this time of the two nations getting to know each other, tales about the magical spirits of the enchanted forest from the Northuldra land became popular in Arendelle.

However, the stories about the spirits that were told during this time were different from *Myth* – the reason being is that, prior to the battle between Arendelle and the Northuldra, the spirits were still living in harmony with the Northuldra. But *Myth's* story ends with the spirits vanishing from the world after the fifth spirit fell out of sync with them. There would be no reason to end the tale on such a "cliffhanger" if it weren't describing the current reality. So it's probable that



An Arendellian family reading a storybook about the spirits

the tale from *Myth* developed some years after the mist covered the forest. What actually happened in the forest that day was passed around through word-of-mouth from the handful of soldiers who had managed to escape. They described the elements raging out of control, spirits vanishing, and other vague descriptions that eventually took the form of *Myth's* climax about the spirits never being seen again after the world was fractured. As mentioned earlier, the spirits vanishing was an assumption linked to their anger about the war, which was a human-caused event. Hence, the theme of the story being that the fifth spirit, the human spirit, fell out of sync with the others, and only by regaining its rhythm with them would harmony be restored.

It's also interesting that the tale refers to the fifth spirit as the "human spirit." The only mention of the fifth spirit we get in *Frozen II* is in a few vague lines from Honeymaren, and she talks about it in a mysterious way, saying things like "the fifth spirit is *said* to be a bridge between us and the magic of nature" and "some say they heard *it* call out the day the forest fell." If the fifth spirit existed in a time recent enough for currently living Northuldra to remember it, they wouldn't use vague descriptions like calling it "it" (they would know if it was male or female) and "it's *said* to be a bridge, etc." That's how one would describe something from myths and legends, not a person who existed in the past few decades. Honeymaren may not have been around during the time of the war, but we



The only physical item related to the fifth spirit that we see: Iduna's scarf

know that at least Yelena was and other older Northuldra were, so if there was a fifth spirit during their time, they would have known and passed on that information to the other Northuldra. This reinforces the fact that the creation of a fifth spirit is something that only happens out of need, and hasn't happened for a very long time. Hence why none of the currently living Northuldra know much about it other than it serving as a bridge between humans and magic. That ambiguous description was passed along into the Arendellian tales about the spirits (they simplified it further by just referring to it as "the human spirit"). Although talk of the Northuldra was looked down upon in Arendelle during the decades following the war, the tales about the spirits remained popular as family stories that intrigued children. So for many of these stories like the one in *Myth*, any mention of the Northuldra was simply omitted (Agnarr's story about the spirits was meant to be a truthful recounting of his time in the forest, which was why he doesn't omit anything about the Northuldra.)

Chapter 2 – A Voice from the Unknown

After Agnarr's story, which serves as the movie's prologue, we return to present-day Arendelle three years after the end of the original *Frozen*. As many fans know, the timeline is proven by Anna's statement to Mattias, that their parents' ship went down six years ago. That was three years before Elsa's coronation and thus three years after *Frozen*. Based on the ensemble song "Some Things Never Change" that reintroduces us to the characters and what they're feeling at this point in their lives, we can see that life in Arendelle has been quite good. And if you consider the events of *Frozen Fever*, *Olaf's Frozen Adventure*, and, though not as literally, other spin-off *Frozen* media like the Disney comics and novels, we get the impression that life for our heroes during those unseen three years has been happy as well. Anna and Elsa have finally been able to spend time as sisters again. Anna is overjoyed that she doesn't have to be alone anymore and can fully indulge in her family and kingdom. And Elsa, though still getting waves of guilt and uncertainty, is happy to have a relationship with her sister and be accepted by those around her. Olaf has kept himself busy learning how to read while Kristoff feels like his love for Anna has peaked and it's finally time to go to the next step in their relationship. After her catastrophic engagement to Hans, it's no surprise that Kristoff would want to take things slowly with Anna, even if it means waiting years for them to start a family. But this particular autumn seems to signify change more than ever, as Olaf, Elsa, and Kristoff express during their respective lines of the song.



It's easy to miss, but Olaf's line "and you all look a little bit older" is actually said to some children passing by, not the audience

Speaking of change, and Elsa in particular, I believe a major plot point of *Frozen II* that is misconstrued by many, is why Elsa hears the voice now and why she then decides to follow it, despite showing how happy she is with her current life in Arendelle. There's no doubt she was happy being queen and finally being able to live a normal life. Considering the burden she has of being the only magical and consequently most powerful person known to exist, is she really content not knowing why this is so? It's easy to answer this question if we simply think back on the chronology of Elsa's life in *Frozen* up to the beginning of *Frozen II*. You have a young girl with these amazing powers who was forced into isolation for most of her life, being told that her powers should be concealed because they're dangerous. It's very, very easy to imagine that during those many years of sitting

alone in her room, among the questions Elsa would ponder to herself is why she was so different: are her powers really a curse or is there some greater purpose she was destined to use them for? Is there someone out there who could give her answers, or even other magical beings like herself (maybe the spirits in that forest from her father's story?). Even if she had wanted to act on these yearnings, like go out and find the magical forest her



Even prior to her isolation, young Elsa is curious about the forest and wonders if others like the Northuldra are magical like her

father had spoken of, she still believed her powers were a curse that needed to be locked away, so she had to put any desires for herself on an indefinite hold. But after the events of *Frozen*, she learns to control her powers and no longer has to live in fearful isolation. The years go by and every day she's grateful for Anna and the life she now has. But occasionally, she still thinks back on those questions from long ago about the purpose and origin of her powers. She loves using magic to wow and amuse the people of Arendelle and decorate the castle...but is that really it? Of course, now that she's happy with her life, these thoughts aren't as prominent as they were during her years of isolation, but they didn't completely go away. If she never did find out if her powers were destined for something greater, she'd be fine with that, but she still would like to know rather than not. She can create ice skates, dresses, and fireworks of ice, but also monstrous blizzards and magic that gives life to otherwise lifeless chunks of snow. Shouldn't something so amazing be used for something grander? Elsa's line in "Some Things Never Change" signifies this torn feeling she has: "I'm not sure I want things to change at all." She likes how things are...but she's not sure.

Which leads to the next question of why Elsa is hearing the voice now. In order to answer that, we first need to know what the voice is. I've seen several interpretations of it: it's the spirit of Iduna, it's Ahtohallan, it's the memory of young Iduna from Ahtohallan, it's within Elsa herself, and similar theories. The documentary series, "Into the Unknown: Making Frozen II," reveals that even the filmmakers struggled with pinpointing exactly what the voice should be. After many meetings and story revisions, they finally settled on it being Iduna calling to Elsa. So how does that come together? Going by facts we can establish from the movie, what Elsa hears is the same call as the one young Iduna uses to summon Gale for help. The call is inspired by kulning, a Norwegian herd-calling sound that's also used in Scandinavian folk music, with a traditional "dies irae" melody. However, the voice for each is different. The voice that guides Elsa is provided by Norwegian singer Aurora, while Iduna's voice is provided by Evan Rachel Wood. Another established fact is that only magical beings seem to be able to hear the voice. Elsa hears the voice obviously, but Bruni is shown to hear it as well. However, this is contradicted by the fact that Agnarr claims to

have heard the voice when he talks about being saved in his story. With all this, we can conclude that there must be two iterations of the spirit call: one only heard by those with magic, that's expressed through a sort of telepathic manner and can travel any distance, and one that's an actual voice that's audible in a normal sense.



Bruni also hears the voice that's calling Elsa

When Iduna called to Gale, her voice was heard normally by Agnarr and perhaps others. However, there was another "layer" of it; the magical sound it produced that travelled to Gale's location. Iduna was able to initiate the magical spirit call, despite not being a magic user herself, for a reason that comes up when Anna and Elsa discover the origin of her scarf. Upon noticing the scarf, Honeymaren pointed out that it was from one of the oldest Northuldra families. The older the family, the farther back their ties to the spirits go and the more connected they are to the spirit's magic, with a few gifted individuals even gaining the ability to call to the spirits on their level (there's no evidence that Iduna or any of the Northuldra can produce magic the way Elsa can, only that they have varying levels of closeness to the magic of the spirits). These old families are also the ones likely to have people who, under certain circumstances, are born with an exceptional connection between magic and humans, called fifth spirits (more on that later in the chapter). The fact that Iduna's scarf has the fifth spirit symbol on it is further proof of her family perhaps being the "creators" of fifth spirits in times of need. When suddenly thrust into the middle of a war and deciding to rescue someone from the opposing side, Iduna called to Gale for help, the spirit she was closest to. In her desperation, she was able to master the spirit call and Gale came to her aid. A few other Northuldra could hear her and thought that it could possibly be a new fifth spirit coming to help them during this terrible battle. Honeymaren informs us of this when she says "some say they heard it (the fifth spirit) call out the day the forest fell."



Young Iduna calling to the wind spirit for help

This then begs the question of whether Iduna was the fifth spirit before Elsa. The only description we have of what the fifth spirit is comes from Honeymaren when she tells Elsa that the fifth spirit is said to be a bridge between the magic of nature and humans. Being a fifth

spirit may not require one to go to Ahtohallan or even be a magical being themselves, only that they somehow bridge a gap between magic and humans. Iduna's choice to save Agnarr could be seen as such – that she was trying to bridge the gap between the Northuldra and Arendelle. But more solid evidence against her being the fifth spirit can be seen in details that are easily missed.

There are three scenes in *Frozen II* where we see spirit symbols appear in the sky: the first is during Agnarr's flashback right before the mist covers the forest, the second is after Elsa creates the suspended ice crystals before all the elements in Arendelle go awry, and the third is when the dam is destroyed. These symbols in the sky seem to signify that the spirits just made a big decision. It's a way for them to communicate so to speak. In the first case, they decided to put the mist over the forest. In the second, they decided to shut off the elements in Arendelle and evacuate the citizens. And in the third, they decided to remove the mist and save Elsa. But in the latter case, there's a noticeable white light in the middle symbol, the fifth spirit symbol, while in the first two cases, the fifth spirit symbol appears "empty."

The only reason I can think of for this is that no one had yet taken on their role as the fifth spirit in the first two cases. (Although Elsa had made a decision to seek out her new role in the second case, she hadn't knowingly accepted it yet, which is why the fifth spirit symbol didn't appear.) So we



The spirit symbol, with the fifth spirit light in its center, appears in the sky

can assume that there was no "official" fifth spirit in the first case either. If Iduna wasn't the fifth spirit by then, I can't think of any point in her life after which she would be endowed with that role.

Another reason Iduna was likely not the fifth spirit has to do with the Northuldra's reaction to the scarf and the ice statues of Iduna and Agnarr. If Iduna was the fifth spirit, wouldn't at least one of the Northuldra still living in the forest when Elsa arrives, know about it? During the scene where Anna and Elsa realize that the girl in the ice statue was their mother thanks to the scarf, wouldn't one of the Northuldra say something like, "that girl was the previous fifth spirit, we were wondering what happened to her all these years." Also, as I mentioned in Chapter 1, the way Honeymaren talks to Elsa about the fifth spirit makes it seem like it's something considered as a legend, not something that existed just a few decades ago. Yelena at least would have known if Iduna was the fifth spirit since she was alive when Iduna was still living in the forest. Considering how doubtful she was of Elsa's intentions, Yelena especially would have pointed it out once she realized that Elsa was Iduna's daughter. I can't imagine young Iduna taking on such an important role and

no one knowing about it, unless it happened after she left the forest and had to keep her Northuldra heritage a secret. But as I mentioned before, we don't know of anything she did in her life before Elsa was born to warrant her being given the fifth spirit role besides saving Agnarr. Ultimately, whether you interpret her as the previous fifth spirit or just part of a family with strong ties to the spirits, isn't terribly important for the events of the movie. Until we learn more about Iduna's past and what the fifth spirit is in future *Frozen* works, this question is still debatable. But regardless, the Northuldra who spread the rumor that the fifth spirit called out the day the forest fell weren't too far off with that idea, as the daughter of the person producing the call did eventually end up becoming the fifth spirit who saved the forest.

As for the owner of the voice that's calling Elsa, we know it can't be solely within Elsa herself since Bruni could hear it too. We also know that it can't be the past memory of young Iduna that we see in "Show Yourself" because there were only empty ice caves in Ahtohallan until Elsa physically went there and used her powers to bring the memories to life. In all likelihood, the one who is calling Elsa is Iduna's spirit – not like the magical spirits, but "spirit" in the traditional sense, as in "soul" or "ghost." Perhaps Iduna's spirit lives on in Ahtohallan for two main reasons: she died not too far from that location, and her family had very close ties to the magic of the forest, with Ahtohallan being its source

(more on Ahtohallan in Chapter 5). More evidence for this is the fact that among the memories of Iduna that appear in Ahtohallan, we see a large image of Iduna that's clearly not a memory because she's singing along with Elsa in "Show Yourself." I've heard claims that this scene of



Elsa meets Iduna's spirit in Ahtohallan

Iduna is actually from a deleted memory from when Elsa was young. But regardless of whether that's true or not, it's not meant to be one in the final version because she's directly addressing Elsa at that moment through the lyrics of the song, telling her "step into your power" and "you are the one you've been waiting for."

With all this in mind, we can go back to the question of why Elsa starts hearing Iduna's magical spirit call three years after the end of *Frozen*. The reason is simply because it required a certain level of control and confidence in terms of both herself and her magic. The trauma she suffered from her years of living in fearful isolation made it difficult for her to concentrate on anything besides trying to get her life together as queen and remedy her relationship with Anna. But finally, after three years of healing and reconciling, she reached a state of stability in her life where she could start thinking about other things...things that she could only ponder about before but could never actually pursue,

such as those questions she had when she was younger about why she has such great powers and whether other magical beings like herself existed. She was only able to hear her mother's call on the "magical plane" once she was sincerely trying to understand her powers. Due to three years of embracing her magic rather than concealing it, her magic had "leveled-up" so to speak, allowing her to connect with magical phenomena she never could before (like sense the spirits from the forest and, of course, hear Iduna's call). Her line "every day's a little harder as I feel my power grow" from "Into the Unknown" reinforces this – that her powers are indeed getting stronger and it's becoming increasingly difficult to suppress the urge to do more with them than make ice skating rinks and snowy decorations. She wants to let them out more often and with less restraint, something that's not easy to do within the confines of a small kingdom. Since the day she died, Iduna's spirit could have been continually trying to call to Elsa, hoping that one day she would finally gain enough control of her powers to hear the call, and enough confidence in herself to answer it.



Elsa feels her power growing every day. What could be the purpose for such strong magic?

"Into the Unknown" is the culmination of Elsa's struggle with this. Her feelings for the voice start out mostly negative; it's keeping her awake at night and interfering with her daily activities. But at the same time, she's intrigued by it. As she expresses in the song, her yearning is twofold. She knows that she's finally found happiness with her family in Arendelle and the voice may not necessarily lead her to something good. But no matter how much she tries to ignore it, those same questions from long ago about why she was given such amazing powers and what greater purpose they could serve, still gnaw at her. She thinks that maybe the reason only she can hear this voice is because it's telling her to go out and find that answer and that maybe she's meant to be somewhere else, using her extraordinary abilities for something very important. Though her confidence in herself is

still a little shaky, she's reached a point in her life where she's ready to take a risk and, for the first time, see something through, solely for her own desire. By the latter part of the song, she's unconsciously embracing this new side of her powers. As she lets her magic flow freely without any restraint,



Though she doesn't know it at the time, Elsa's powers create images of the past she'll need to uncover

images of the forest, reindeer, and her parents as children, manifest, which is a clear sign that she's ready to use her magic for its true purpose – extracting water memories to reveal the past. This voice is the only magical entity besides herself (and the trolls if you count them) that she's encountered in her whole life. Perhaps whoever it is could finally provide answers about her powers, answers she was always yearning for but wasn't able to go out and find until now.

When Elsa fully embraces her desire to follow the voice and let her powers loose without restraint, her magic goes into overdrive. She inadvertently creates ice crystals all around Arendelle with the four spirit symbols on them, a sign that, unbeknown to her at the time, signifies that she's finally ready to pursue her role as the fifth spirit. The spirits sense this and decide that it's time to make preparations. With a flash of their spirit symbol in the sky, they go to work sabotaging their respective elements within Arendelle to force the citizens out. Everyone from the kingdom eventually gathers on the cliffs a distance away. Knowing that they'll probably be stuck there for an indefinite amount of time, Kristoff goes back to gather blankets to give out when things seem a little calmer. Perhaps there's a break in the chaos so other Arendellians also briefly return to their homes to gather clothes and other essentials, since we see them again at the end of the movie in their regular clothes.



Kristoff and Sven return with blankets to hand out to the stranded citizens

As everyone gets their bearings, Elsa puts the pieces together and realizes what had happened. She could read the runes of the four elements on the ice crystals she created (no doubt she learned to decipher some old languages during her years of studying in her room), and she took note of exactly what was happening in Arendelle – namely, those four elements specifically were going out of whack. She thinks back to her father's story from long ago about the four spirits of the enchanted forest, a story she still thought of from time to time due to its relation to magic. She had created a burst of new magic that wasn't snowflakes but ice crystals with the spirits' symbols on them, and at the same time she did that, all those elements went out of control. Whatever magic she unleashed at that moment triggered the spirits of the elements to do this, spirits that had supposedly vanished (according to her father's story). But whether they were temporarily gone or only sleeping, her magic had woken them up, and for some reason they decided to make Arendelle unlivable.

When Pabbie arrives with the other trolls, he uses his troll magic to provide clues about the meaning of their current situation. As we know from the first *Frozen*, Pabbie's visions cannot accurately predict the future or provide answers that are otherwise unknown. It

can only show pieces of possible endings and glimpses that hint at truths yet to be discovered. His vision ends abruptly, not showing any future outcomes for Arendelle, to



The dam appears in Pabbie's vision because it's part of the dispute with the Northuldra, but the reason has yet to be found

Arendelle to the enchanted forest (it's unknown how many stops they made and for how long). The Arendelle evacuation happened in the middle of the night and they appeared to leave in the daylight of the following morning. A brief montage shows day becoming night, and then it's daylight again when they finally reach the mist.

which he perceives as Arendelle having no future until the wrong is righted and the truth is found. This lack of a future doesn't mean that Arendelle will necessarily be destroyed, but it will forever remain in this uninhabitable state until things are fixed. It takes our heroes roughly a day to travel from

Chapter 3– The Spirits

The spirits of the four elements – water, wind, earth, and fire – are a major part of *Frozen II* and I've already mentioned them several times. But in this chapter, I want to discuss them in much more detail, specifically what they are and why they do the things they do throughout the movie. Much of what the spirits do, and what they're referred to, is as a collective entity, almost godlike in their actions and abilities, i.e., giving Elsa her powers, erecting the mist all around the forest, and deciding to save Elsa so she could spare Arendelle from the flood. Yet the spirits we see as actual, physical characters are very unlike this. They appear to simply be magical creatures that can control their respective elements, not gods that can carry out complex moral decisions. For example, Bruni seems to just be a cute, simple-minded animal, and the earth giants are just big brutes who are quick to violence and sleep most of the time. With statements like "the spirits decided to do this or that," it's very hard to imagine these characters being the spirits in question that carry out these miraculous actions. Rather, my interpretation is that the spirits themselves – the ones with the unseen godlike powers to invoke the major events in the story – are the actual spirits, and the creatures like the Nokk and Bruni that we see "on Earth" are simply their physical manifestations...a way for them to interact with mortal life. This would explain, for example, why there's more than one earth giant. None of the earth giants are the actual earth spirit, they're just its physical extension that was created to carry out its will in the forest. This isn't too unlike poly-theological religions like Shintoism, in which gods are said to exist in all aspects of nature and take on many forms, or even the mythology of the ancient Greeks where the gods who lived on the inaccessible Mount Olympus would create magical creatures, or even temporarily become those creatures themselves, in order to carry out tasks on Earth. If we view the spirits of *Frozen II* in a similar way, the plot elements surrounding them become much easier to understand.



The earth giants are the physical manifestations of the earth spirit

With all this in mind, let's piece together the chronological actions of the spirits (the actual spirits, not their physical forms) and why they did what they did. As I discussed in Chapter 1, the spirits' magic lived in coexistence with the Northuldra before the war with Arendelle. Although the spirits can extend their magical influence beyond the forest, which we know because they were able to wipe out the elements in Arendelle, their magic

is the strongest in the enchanted forest because of its proximity to Ahtohallan (more on Ahtohallan in Chapter 5). This is also why their physical forms like the Nokk and earth giants reside here. The spirits knew that the dam was harmful to the forest – this is made clear by the fact that they evacuated the people of Arendelle once they got the signal from Elsa that she was ready to pursue her role as the fifth spirit. They knew that, should Elsa discover the truth and choose to do the right thing by destroying the dam, there's a chance Arendelle would be flooded and its citizens would be drowned. Although the spirits were still angered by the war, they did not have murderous intent; their motive from the beginning was to have the people of Arendelle realize the wrongdoing of their former leader and set things right on their own. The spirits themselves could have easily destroyed the dam, but that would defeat the whole purpose of the Arendellians being the ones to not only acknowledge the sin of their past, but choose to correct it even at the cost of wiping out their homeland.

When the war began, the spirits were enraged and unleashed their magic against all the sources of hostility, whether Arendellian or Northuldra. The fighting finally subsided as the remaining Arendellians retreated, and the spirits decided to enclose the forest in an impenetrable mist. They did this because both sides had lost their leaders and were thoroughly convinced that the other side was the instigator. The spirits didn't want the Arendellians to return to the forest with stronger forces and an intent to continue the war, nor did they want the Northuldra to take revenge on Arendelle, perhaps by sneaking into the kingdom for a surprise attack. Cutting off the two sides from each other was how they could guarantee there would be no more bloodshed between them, and the handful of Arendellians who remained in the forest after the mist was erected eventually came to a

truce with the Northuldra (more on that in Chapter 4). After that, the spirits put themselves in a dormant state. They no longer used their magic to interact with the Northuldra, virtually removing their physical presence from the forest. The spirits didn't intend for the mist



The mist covering the forest on the day of the battle

to be permanent, however, because there was something else they took note of that day (especially the wind spirit) – that a Northuldra girl from one of the old families, a family that was very close to the magic of the spirits, took it upon herself to save the prince of Arendelle from the chaos of the war. Eventually, many years later, the two were reunited, fell in love, and got married (more on them in Chapter 4). The spirits had kept a watch on this Northuldra girl who was now living amongst Arendelle, and when the love between her and the king was confirmed through marriage, they knew that this was progress for mending the relationship between the two sides (even though Agnarr didn't yet know that

his wife was Northuldra).

Iduna, a Northuldra woman who is now the queen of Arendelle, could be the one to discover the truth about the past and lead the two lands in mending their relationship. But there was one major hurdle: no one currently living knew exactly what happened that day, that King Runeard had been the one to start the fight and that his motive behind building the dam was to harm the forest. Without that truth, Arendelle would continue to think that the Northuldra were to blame. However, all memories, whether known by all or known by none, can be revealed in Ahtohallan, but doing so requires an intense level of magical ability, something Iduna doesn't possess. But rather than completely shift Iduna's life by suddenly bestowing her with magic, the spirits instead made the decision to grant that gift to her first-born child. This child could then spend her whole life perfecting her magic so that she'd eventually be powerful enough to sense the spirits and travel to Ahtohallan. But unfortunately, things didn't go as smoothly as that when Elsa accidentally hurt Anna with her magic. Instead of embracing her magic, she was told to conceal it, that her emotions could make it go out of control. If this life-changing accident hadn't occurred, there's a good chance Elsa would have been able to hear her mother's call from Ahtohallan much sooner in her life. But eventually, after the events of *Frozen*, Elsa was finally able to start mastering her powers instead of fearing them. And on that fateful night, when she made the decision to follow that yearning "into the unknown," the spirits sensed that the new fifth spirit, the one they bestowed with ice magic, was ready to take on her role.

This is also a good time to explain why Elsa was given ice powers specifically. It has to do with a concept that's brought up several times in *Frozen II*– that water has memory. It's based on real-world ice cores, which are



Elsa unknowingly signals to the spirits that she's ready to learn more about her powers

samples of ice taken from glaciers that can reveal information about past climates and chemical compositions throughout the age range of the core. Obviously, the movie takes creative liberties with this concept by making it much more literal and magical than it actually is, but it's not something entirely made-up. I discuss Ahtohallan in more detail in Chapter 5, but as the song "All is Found" goes, Ahtohallan was a magical river that eventually flowed to the sea (as most rivers do) and became a glacier. It still holds all memories from its waters, but since it's a glacier, they're frozen within the particles of the ice...so a magic that can manipulate ice is needed to decipher them. The spirits knew that the hidden truth about Runeard's betrayal could only be found in Ahtohallan, which is why the one to take on the role of the fifth spirit needed ice magic.

After the spirits were roused from their dormant state by Elsa that night, their physical forms - Bruni, Gale, the Nokk, and the earth giants - began manifesting within the forest once again. Just like evacuating the citizens of Arendelle, bringing their physical forms back into the forest was also done in preparation for Elsa finding the truth about the past. However, until the wrongdoing was resolved, the spirits would not return to their peaceful coexistence with the Northuldra. Although only about a day and a half had passed from the spirits' return to the forest up until Elsa's arrival, the Northuldra were already very aware that the spirits were not the friendly beings from decades before.

Honeydew's line "the earth giants now roam the north at night" suggests that the earth giants weren't around before, but now they are. They were rampant on the night they first appeared, then slept the following day, only to wander around the northern areas again that night. Being the largest and most potentially destructive creatures in the forest, the Northuldra noticed them and their habits immediately. It's unknown if they had encounters with Gale, Bruni, or the Nokk prior to when we first see them in the movie.

When Elsa touches the mist, the spirits know that she's ready to take the next step in her journey, so they open it up for the group to enter. There's debate about whether the mist only parted because Elsa took Anna's hand when she touched it. I recall reading a few *Frozen II* storybooks that emphasized this, which would reinforce the fact that they're two sides of the fifth spirit "bridge" (more on that in Chapter 6). Further evidence of this is that, once they're "ushered" past the outskirts of the forest by the mist, when they try to go back, they do so individually. Anna presses her hands against the mist and Elsa tries shooting a blast of her magic through it. As expected, they're unsuccessful. Whether the

spirits intended to only let them in and not let them out until the dam is destroyed, or whether they could freely go in or out as long as Elsa touched the mist while holding Anna's hand, isn't entirely clear. But it makes more sense that once Elsa finally arrived there to fulfill her destiny, the spirits wouldn't let



Anna and Elsa unsuccessfully attempt to go back through the mist

her out until she carried out that task (or at least made a solid attempt). And it also makes sense that the mist parted particularly because Anna and Elsa faced it together, for reasons I'll discuss further in Chapter 6.

Upon arriving at the forest, Elsa notices how beautiful it is. As discussed in Chapter 1, the type of damage being done to the forest from the dam isn't something that would necessarily cause all the trees to die or anything very noticeable like that. Its effects are more subtle, like the disappearance of certain species, decreased water quality, and

disrupting of ecosystems closer to the water. Speaking of the disappearance of species, we don't see any other animals in the forest besides the Northuldra's domesticated reindeer. We do hear birds chirping at certain points, and Olaf encounters unidentified creatures during his song "When I am Older," but that's it. So perhaps some animals had slowly been disappearing during the years the dam stood.

Once the group arrives in the forest, the spirits begin their interactions by "watching" them at first. They're especially fascinated by Olaf, a being brought to life solely by Elsa's magic. As seen in "When I am



There's at least one wild species still living in the forest: these mysterious creatures Olaf encounters

Older," the spirits mess around with him when he becomes separated from the others, observing his reactions when they prod him with their magic. But after that initial encounter, they set their sights on the rest of the group. They know that Elsa is the fifth spirit they bestowed with magic, but they don't really "know" her. Did she come to the forest with intent to help? Did she inherit her grandfather's hatred of the Northuldra? Does she intend to use her powers for revenge? Will she embrace the spirits in their hostile state, or be afraid of them? In order to confirm all this, the spirits decide to test her.

Gale is the first to unleash her power (Gale has been confirmed as female) on them head-on by sucking them up into a big whirlwind. But when Anna is about to get hit by a tree branch inside the vortex, Elsa shoots off a blast of magic to knock it away. At the sight of Elsa finally using her magic, Gale gets excited. She deposits the others from the whirlwind and concentrates only on Elsa, creating wisps of wind around her hands, urging her to use her magic again. As the whirlwind gets stronger, Elsa releases more powerful magic and inadvertently extracts water memories from that spot in the forest all those years ago. As her ice swirls within Gale's wind, she sees and hears pieces of memories from the area: someone shouting her father's name, swords clashing, and her grandfather proclaiming "for Arendelle." When she releases one last blast of power to push Gale's winds away, her ice gives shape to some of those memories and they appear as frozen statues of reindeer running, an Arendellian soldier brandishing his sword, and the Nokk rising up from the water to attack the warring humans. Based on what she heard and saw in Gale's wind and what lies before her now, Elsa correctly deduces that the ice figures she created are moments in time. Gale is satisfied with Elsa's progress and makes peace with the group before leading them to another ice statue farther in the distance. Anna recognizes one of the faces on the statue as their father when he was younger. Although she never knew him at this age, she had seen many portraits of him as a child throughout the castle. They don't immediately recognize the face of their mother since they never saw portraits of her as a



Elsa's magic uses the water memories of the area to reveal scenes from the past

trying with all her might to put out the fire with her ice. Once Bruni acknowledges Elsa's gentleness and willingness to make friends with him, he removes the fire (what's interesting about the fire spirit is that he seems to be able to control the destructiveness of his powers. Once he removes the fire, there's no visible damage on some of the trees. He could have just been testing Elsa and didn't want to actually destroy the Northuldra's campsite too much in the process). Soon after this, thanks to a revelation about their mother's scarf from Ryder and Honeymaren, Anna and Elsa realize that the other figure in the statue that's saving their father has the same scarf – it must be their mother! There are probably other things that tipped them off too, like the fact that they never knew much about their mother's past, unlike their father. When Elsa proudly proclaims that their mother was Northuldra, the spirits are delighted. Wanting to give everyone a sign of hope, they work their magic into Elsa's, illuminating the ice statues, the droplets of frozen water on the tree leaves, and even Olaf, in an ethereal light. The Northuldra are no doubt familiar with signals like this from the spirits, and respond by singing their vuelie chant.



The spirits respond to Elsa's progress by magically lighting up the surrounding ice and water

After a brief respite that night, the earth spirit decides to initiate an encounter with Elsa's magic. How will she respond to the extremely intimidating earth giants? The earth giants change their course that night. Instead of wandering the north (as Honeymaren states, this seems to be their habit since they appeared a day and a half or so ago) they make their way to the Northuldra village. Elsa is fascinated by the towering creatures and starts to approach them before being pulled aside by Anna. Rather than pursue the giants, they decide to continue their journey north where they eventually find the remains of their parents' ship (as a side note, taming each of the four spirits was not a prerequisite for Elsa becoming the fifth spirit. By the time she settles the Nokk, the spirits already know her worthiness for the role. And as we see with the earth giants later, all the spirits became peaceful once the dam was destroyed).

After the encounter with Gale and the ice statues in the forest, Elsa is starting to understand the "water has memory" concept and how it relates to her powers. She wants to know what transpired on the ship: what were her parents doing in the Dark Sea when they were supposed to be in the Southern Seas? Were they really on their way to Ahtohallan? How did they spend their final moments? Instead of unintentionally creating ice memories, this is the first time Elsa purposely tries to create them. She concentrates her magic, extracting the water particles from within every nook and cranny of the ship,



Elsa uses her magic to extract water particles in the ship and create sights and sounds from the past

the distressing scene, Anna starts putting the pieces together, particularly about the fact that their mother, a Northuldra, saved their father, an Arendellian, as well as Yelena's question about why someone from Arendelle was granted magical powers. She also thinks back on Pabbie's vision about the past not being what it seems and the truth needing to be found, plus the fact that Elsa's powers can reveal past memories. It finally clicks – their mother, someone from one of the Northuldra's oldest families, did a good deed...the spirits must have known this and gave her first-born child the gift of magic, something she can use to reveal memories which will, hopefully, lead her to the specific memories needed to resolve the past.

When Elsa finds out about the fifth spirit and the fact that her parents were headed to Ahtohallan, a magical river said to hold all the answers about the past, she knows that's where she must go. This voice could possibly be the fifth spirit calling her there. But according to their parents' map, Ahtohallan lays beyond the Dark Sea. Anna and Elsa seem familiar with the Dark Sea; its dangerous waters are likely well known amongst anyone involved with traveling by ships, especially royalty. Elsa knows that her powers are the only thing that stand a chance of making it through the Dark Sea. But when Anna insists on coming along, Elsa sends her and Olaf away in an ice boat down an icy path she created, back the way they came, probably back to the Northuldra village. Unfortunately, in an attempt to stop the boat using Olaf's arm, Anna accidentally causes it to veer off the path and into a nearby river surrounded by the sleeping earth giants. This is similar to the scene in *Frozen* where Elsa creates the giant snowman, Marshmallow, to simply throw Anna, Kristoff, and Olaf out of her ice palace, but Anna turns it into a dangerous situation by angering him, causing him to chase them. In both these cases, Elsa is fearful of putting

and manages to conjure up a scene of her parents' final moment before a large wave overtook them, along with her mother saying "Ahtohallan has to be the source of her magic" and her father saying "we keep going, for Elsa."

As she tries to comfort Elsa from

loved ones in danger and hurriedly uses her powers to create a solution, and when Anna tries to fight back against Elsa pushing her away, she inadvertently makes the situation worse for herself.



Once she's alone, Elsa tries using her ice to cross the raging waves

The path Elsa creates for the ice boat, back through the forest to safety until Anna steers the boat away

of the Dark Sea. Since the Nokk needs water to move about, the water spirit takes this opportunity to create an encounter with her. The Nokk is one of the angrier spirits of the forest and holds nothing back in testing Elsa and her powers with brute force. Although she struggles for a while, Elsa finally manages to mount him, staying firmly on his back as he tries to buck her off. Satisfied with her show of determination, the Nokk finally calms down and takes her to her destination – Ahtohallan. As she makes her way through its massive chambers of ice that only she can easily maneuver (thanks to her powers), the spirits sense her eagerness. Elsa can feel the magic pouring out of this place. Finally, after wondering her whole life if her powers were meant for some greater purpose, and even if magic existed anywhere else in the world besides within her, she's about to get answers. As she reaches the final entryway into the heart of Ahtohallan, she effortlessly uses her magic to shatter the barrier into multiple ice crystals with the element symbols, the same crystals she created back in Arendelle the night she awoke the spirits and began this

journey. But unlike that time where she made the crystals accidentally, this time she created them intentionally, another signal to the spirits that she's reached the last step in her journey and is ready to fully take on her role as the fifth spirit.

As she continues through the



With her "upgraded" magic, Elsa passes the last obstacle to Ahtohallan's dome

dark dome chamber, the crystals she created sweep around her, brimming with magic. Each of the spirits in turn extend their influence to the occasion and create shapes of their respective forms that culminate into giant ice crystals with their elemental symbols. Elsa takes her place in the center, the last sign the spirits need to know that she's embraced all that had been built up for her since the day they gifted Iduna with a magical daughter. The spirits' magic, Elsa's magic, and the magical energy of Ahtohallan collide, causing the chamber dome to come alive with memories relating to Iduna, the one whose spirit had been calling to Elsa from within Ahtohallan (as discussed in Chapter 2). As Elsa is

overjoyed at meeting her mother and finally experiencing a place with magic even stronger than her own, the spirits finish the fifth spirit initiation by creating a new dress for Elsa. Magical crystals rise up from the giant crystals and infuse into Elsa's clothes, transforming into a flowing white dress, imbued with the symbols of the elements. With her heightened powers and renewed sense of purpose from meeting her mother and connecting with the spirits, Elsa waves her arms around, unleashing a giant blast of power that turns Ahtohallan's memories into sculptures of ice...among them, the memories she will need to find to discover the truth.



The spirits' magic mixes into the magic in Elsa's dress to create a stunning new outfit

Chapter 4— *Those Shut In and the One Shut Out*

I wanted to use this chapter to discuss more minor events and characters that comprise a lot of the "what you didn't see" scenes of the story. As mentioned in Chapter 1, I want to keep other sources besides *Frozen II* itself to a minimum, but I will be referencing a few scenes from the book "Frozen II: The Deluxe Junior Novelization" for this chapter. The book is a faithful retelling of the movie, but includes a handful of additional scenes. While I don't feel most of these new scenes need to be cited for the majority of topics I discuss here, since the movie itself provides ample content, there are a few scenes the book describes that help reinforce ideas that the movie hints at but lacks actual footage. I would make these inferences anyway, but having it sourced in an official *Frozen II* book helps.

Firstly, is some background on the Northuldra and Arendellian soldiers who had been trapped in the forest for over 30 years since the spirits erected the mist around it. It's unknown how many of them perished during the battle, but the first few days after were extremely tragic as both sides had to bury their dead and mourn their lost. Mattias and his soldiers searched tirelessly for Agnarr, and when they couldn't find him, they could only hope he had made it out of the forest safely. At some point, the two groups must have come to some kind of truce. Mattias took on the leadership role of the soldiers while Yelena became the leader of the Northuldra after their previous leader was killed (perhaps she was related to him and next in line for the position). "Frozen II: The Deluxe Junior Novelization" explains that the two sides did call a truce and devised many plans for getting past the mist such as building a catapult and digging underground. Over the years, they tested every single inch of the mist for a weakness they could break through, but in the end, nothing worked. Since the Northuldra lived in the forest, they were already accustomed to living off the land and had resources on-hand in their village. The Arendellian soldiers, however, came to the forest with only their clothes, weapons, and perhaps a few meager supplies they brought via bags and wagons. They had to become adept at hunting for food with their weapons, and although the Northuldra did share tools with them, the two sides kept interacting to a minimum. Over the years, Yelena and Mattias developed a kind of respect for each other, but never fully trusted each other.



Of the many soldiers who arrived that day, only a few remained in the forest for 34 years

There are a few other facts that neither the movie nor the book state but are easy enough to infer. Over the span of the 34 years of the forest being closed off, some of the Arendellian soldiers and Northuldra citizens must have died. We see only a small handful of soldiers with Mattias throughout the movie compared to the amount seen in Agnarr's flashback, so a lot of them either died in the battle, died during their time in the forest, or escaped before the mist went up (at least one must have made it back to Arendelle since someone had to man the cart that brought young Agnarr and Iduna back). Also, going by how well-kept the soldiers' uniforms appear to be, they probably sewed themselves new clothes to wear and only wore their uniforms on occasions, like investigating the commotion in the forest when our heroes arrive. And although we don't see it, the soldiers must have made some kind of housing for themselves using trees and other materials from the forest.

As for the Northuldra, they saw deaths on their side as well, both from natural and unnatural causes, as well as births. One important fact we can assume is that no one from Iduna's family remained after those 34 years. When Honeymaren points out that Iduna's scarf was from one of the oldest families and that it belonged to the girl in the ice statue, none of the Northuldra pointed out that they were part of said family and that they knew this girl who had the scarf. There's a good chance that her whole family was slain during



Although they recognize the scarf, none of the currently living Northuldra recognize the ice statue of young Iduna

the battle. Maybe Runeard wanted to target them specifically because of their stronger ties to magic. Or perhaps there weren't many of them to begin with and they all died sometime during the years of being trapped in the forest. As a side note, Yelena refers to the Northuldra as "the people of the

Sun"; practically all things in nature revolve around the energy of the sun, especially its impact on the growth of plant life. Despite the lack of scientific knowledge back then, especially for a tribal people like the Northuldra, they still knew how important the sun is, which is indicative of their strong ties to nature.

And now for an important and highly debatable topic – what happened to Iduna from the time she escaped the forest to becoming queen of Arendelle? The movie offers very little information about this part of the *Frozen* timeline, but again, with enough thinking and insight, it's not too difficult to piece together a series of logical events. First off, something we do have evidence for is the fact that Agnarr did not know that Iduna was the one who rescued him, nor that she was Northuldra, until they were already married. We know this because one of the memories Elsa sees in Ahtohallan is of the two of them as adults in

Arendellian attire, with Iduna telling Agnarr that she needs to tell him about her past and where she's from, to which he replies "I'm listening" while holding her close and affectionately stroking her cheek. This implies that there was some day where she decided to tell him that she was

Northuldra (also very likely that she told him she was the one who rescued him too). Based on this, we can assume that day happened sometime after the night Agnarr tells the story of the enchanted forest to Anna and Elsa, since he says that he



Memory of Iduna confessing to Agnarr about her past

wishes he knew who rescued him after he finishes the story. So with this in mind, Iduna and Agnarr must have separated right after they returned from the forest. Fearing what the Arendellians would do if they found out that a Northuldra girl snuck into their kingdom, Iduna ran off immediately after arriving. She discarded her Northuldra clothes so no one would know who she was. As for what happened to her soon after that, for lack of other sources, I'll once again reference "Frozen II: The Deluxe Junior Novelization" because it includes an additional memory Elsa sees in Ahtohallan that sheds a lot of light on this topic. The memory is of Iduna in an orphanage in the woods outside Arendelle, with a voice saying "No one knew who you were" and "You didn't have any family with you." It makes sense that this girl with unknown origins caught wandering around Arendelle would be taken to an orphanage. Of course, with Arendelle's hatred of the Northuldra after the battle in the forest, there was no way Iduna would tell anyone the truth about where she came from, at least for a very long time.

There's another memory we see in the movie that shows young Iduna and Agnarr together. Agnarr is sitting under a tree with a book while Iduna, with her hair up in traditional Arendelle style, playfully hangs down from the tree and asks him what he's reading. He calls her by her name and she calls him "Your Majesty," implying that they already knew each other. What we can piece together from this is that Agnarr first met Iduna when they were still children (technically their second meeting, but they both remember this one). Since he had only caught a short glimpse of her playing with Gale before the battle broke out, and was unconscious while she rescued him, he didn't recognize her and only knew her as this playful girl from the orphanage. It's possible Agnarr liked visiting the children in the orphanage and preferred to do his reading in the woods nearby. Iduna knew he was the one she rescued and longed to tell him, but that would risk revealing her Northuldra background. Instead, she decided to make friends with him and took every opportunity to talk to him during his visits. How their friendship eventually lead to a marriage between a king and a woman of unknown lineage is a story yet to be told (it probably will be in the upcoming *Frozen II* spin-off novel "Dangerous



One of Iduna and Agnarr's many meetings during their childhood

Secrets: The Story of Iduna and Agnarr," set to be released later this year). But for now, all that's important is that they eventually fell in love and Agnarr decided to marry her despite her lack of royal birth.

Fast-forward many years later to the night where Elsa accidentally

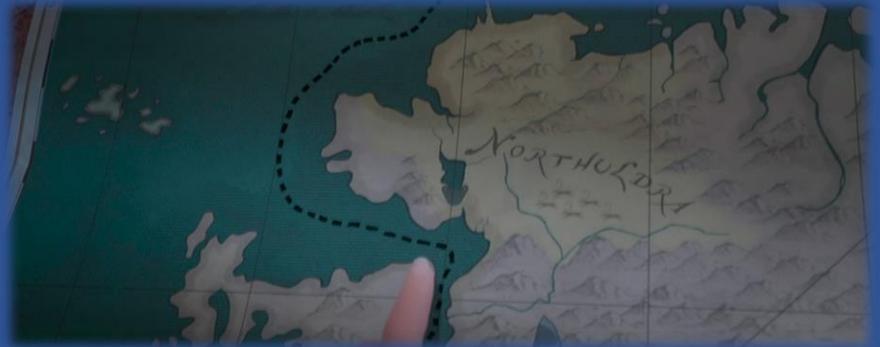
hurts Anna with her ice magic. This was a turning point for Iduna and Agnarr as they realized that their daughters' lives were at stake if nothing could be done to help Elsa better control her powers. After hearing Pabbie's vision in the beginning of *Frozen* – that fear would be Elsa's greatest enemy – they thought that keeping her isolated so she wouldn't be afraid of hurting others was best until they could figure out a better solution. No doubt another reason to keep her powers hidden was fear that it could be seen as heretic sorcery, like the kind associated with the Northuldra. What Iduna and Agnarr did from this point until they boarded the ship that would eventually take their lives, is up for speculation. But again, we can infer things based on what's revealed in *Frozen II*. We know that sometime during this period, Iduna decided to tell Agnarr the truth about who she was. Director Jennifer Lee has stated that she feels this event occurred on the same night as the accident with Elsa's magic, which makes sense. The accident was a wake-up call for the young parents. They now realized that Elsa's powers are growing along with her and an accident like this could happen again until they understood more about her powers. Memories flooded back to Iduna that night of all the discussions about magic when she was a Northuldra child, especially the place in her mother's lullaby that was said to be the origin of all magic: Ahtohallan. After hearing her husband tell the tale of his time in the enchanted forest, and now having her daughter struggle with controlling magic, Iduna knew that she had to do what's best for her family and not hide any knowledge she had that could help their situation. When she told Agnarr the truth that night, he was of course shocked but understood why she kept it a secret. The two of them decided to do what they could to find out about Elsa's powers and how she can control them.

Since she didn't have to hide her Northuldra heritage anymore, Iduna told Agnarr about the possible existence of Ahtohallan, among other magic-related myths she learned as a child. In between their royal duties, they spent the next several years researching all they could about magic, especially the location of Ahtohallan, and if it does actually exist. Once again, "Frozen II: The Deluxe Junior Novelization" has an extra memory that shows Iduna studying old documents in the library of the castle, with Agnarr asking "What have you found?" to which she replies "I think we've been looking on the wrong side of the sea." This implies that they were looking for Ahtohallan but figured out it was on the other side

of the sea, likely the Dark Sea that they eventually traveled to. They do all their research in secret, since Agnarr is fearful that if anyone discovered that the king was studying "forbidden sorcery," he could lose the trust of his people, and also risk revealing Elsa and Iduna's ties to magic. A possible reason their research took so long is because what they had available in Arendelle was limited (perhaps they had to get old books and such from other kingdoms). Finally, they settled on Ahtohallan's location being just beyond the Dark Sea and came up with a route they could take. They knew traveling those waters were dangerous and they didn't even know if they'd actually find what they had been looking for. Rather than get Elsa's hopes up about possibly finding Ahtohallan, and putting her in danger if she insisted on coming along, Iduna and Agnarr instead told everyone that they were going on a trip somewhere beyond the Southern Seas.

We can make inferences about the route they took based on the map that Anna and Elsa find in the shipwreck. The map shows a dotted line traveling north from Arendelle to the Dark Sea that lies close to the Northuldra's land, with a hand-drawn landmark for Ahtohallan at its peak. There are

two possible scenarios in regards to the mist's proximity to the Dark Sea. One is that the mist does not extend into the ocean and stops on or around the shore of the Northuldra land. With this view in mind, Agnarr and Iduna would have easily



Map showing Agnarr and Iduna's route to the supposed location of Ahtohallan

followed the route they drew on the map, but never made it past the treacherous waves of the Dark Sea. After they perished, the ship eventually washed up on the shores of the enchanted forest. An interesting line from Olaf as he's walking through the shipwreck is when he questions "How did the ship get through the mist? I thought nobody could but us. Unless no one was on it..." This shows that the mist does allow non-living matter to pass through (some of it at least). That would make sense since, for example, water from the oceans beyond still flows into the rivers of the forest, air and oxygen from outside must still come in so everyone can breathe, and at least some sunlight must shine in so the plants can grow. The mist's northern boundary stopping at the ocean would also explain why the Arendellian soldiers didn't simply build a boat to try and sail away – they couldn't reach the ocean because the mist was blocking it off. However, this begs the question of why Elsa was able to reach the shore and make her attempts at crossing the Dark Sea. The answer to this is either that the spirits decided to let her pass through because, at that point in her journey, they knew she was determined to go where she needed to go. Or, which leads to the other possible scenario for the relationship between the mist and the Dark Sea, the northern part of the mist actually encompassed the Dark Sea, at least the part around Ahtohallan. If we go by this scenario, then Agnarr and Iduna must not have

known prior that they wouldn't be able to reach Ahtohallan because the mist extended there. Since the Dark Sea is so dangerous, nobody had bothered to sail through it to check if it was part of the mist's domain. Their ship must have capsized before they even reached the mist's ocean boundary, since the memory from their final moments that Elsa conjures has Agnarr saying "We keep going, for Elsa." If they'd reached the mist, they wouldn't have been able to keep going. If the mist did extend into the ocean, then the Arendellian soldiers must have attempted to make boats at some point to try and sail away from the forest, only to find that the mist still trapped them within the Dark Sea. Ultimately, like the question from Chapter 2 about whether Iduna herself was the previous fifth spirit or not, whether the mist's reach extended into the Dark Sea or not, is debatable. Either



Agnarr and Iduna's ship washed up from the Dark Sea

interpretation has evidence and works fine within the events of the movie. I'm more inclined to the first scenario that it surrounds the land and doesn't go into the ocean. There's more to back that up and it makes Olaf's aforementioned line meaningful.

Another interpretation I've seen of what happened to Agnarr and Iduna's ship is that the Nokk may have caused the roaring waves which eventually killed them. There isn't any evidence for this other than the Nokk appearing in the Dark Sea to challenge Elsa many decades after the shipwreck. If the spirits were dormant after the mist was erected, then the Nokk couldn't have been around to cause any sort of havoc at that time. But if the spirits exist in the way I explained in Chapter 3, then they've always been around, just not in their physical forms. However, the way they're portrayed throughout the events of the movie is impartial, like other gods and deities in various religions. Even if they're present at all times, they don't always help everyone who needs helping nor interrupt the natural order of things for anyone's sake. The Dark Sea always has dangerous waves to prevent non-magical beings from reaching Ahtohallan, and Agnarr and Iduna took a big risk trying to sail it. Despite Iduna's ties to magic, the spirits weren't obligated to calm the waters just so she could pass through. As I'll explain in Chapter 5, Ahtohallan is a place that is not meant to be easily accessed by just anyone.

Chapter 5– Magic's Core

Ahtohallan is the most mysterious plot element of *Frozen II*. In the "Into the Unknown: Making Frozen II" documentary series, the filmmakers had struggles coming up with the design and function of Ahtohallan in the latter part of the story. However, like everything else, there is enough information provided to create an adequate picture of what this magical entity is. The general description is that it's a magical river said to hold all

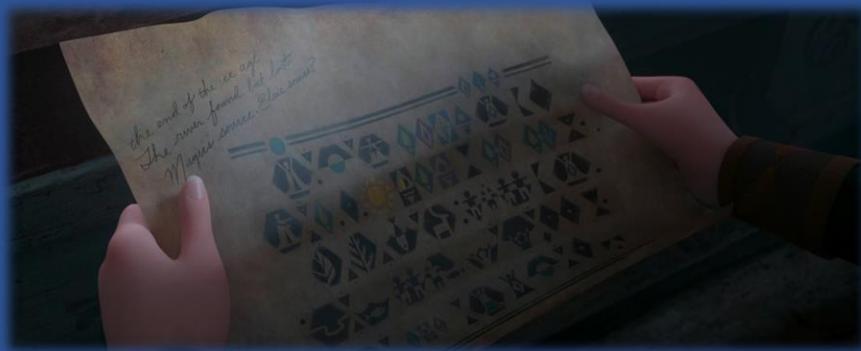
memories, and thus, answers, about past events. Throughout the movie, it's spoken of as something from legends, something that no one is sure even exists. Since Ahtohallan's physical location is in close proximity to the enchanted forest and the Northuldra (at least in its current state as a



Ahtohallan as it exists during the Frozen timeline

giant glacier), it became a myth passed down through stories and songs in Northuldra culture. Like the legend of the fifth spirit mentioned in Chapter 2, Ahtohallan may have, at some point, been confirmed as real – perhaps by a previous fifth spirit – but it was so long ago, maybe even centuries ago, that the truth of it faded in time and it became nothing more than a myth told among Northuldra families. (Since the Dark Sea is so dangerous, no one could actually reach Ahtohallan to confirm its existence.) This would also imply that there was no need for the spirits to grant anyone the power to delve into Ahtohallan's memories during this long span of time (and possibly no need for a fifth spirit during this time of peace either, if we want to assume the fifth spirit always has ties to Ahtohallan). In addition to filling Ahtohallan's chambers with a deep abyss and blockades of ice only maneuverable by magic, the spirits made the Dark Sea have forever raging waters to prevent any but those chosen to reach it. The Dark Sea became infamous among sailors for having waters cursed by the spirits, and all those who dared to travel through it perished.

While very little is stated explicitly, the movie provides a plethora of clues about the history and traits of Ahtohallan. Probably the most telling clue is what Anna and Elsa find in the water-proof compartment of the ship along with the map: a piece of parchment with writing of an unknown origin, as well as a few sentences handwritten by Iduna in the upper left corner that read "The end of the ice age, the river found but lost, magic's source, Elsa's source." The "ice age" could be referring to the fact that Ahtohallan, once a river as described in the "All is Found" lullaby, somehow froze during an ice age (when this ice age



A parchment with ancient runes and a note from Iduna

still exists but is "lost" in the sense that, either all the memories are now hidden in the glacier instead of a free-flowing river, or the fact that even if one finds the river, unless they have powers bestowed by the spirits, the memories will still be "lost" if they don't have the required magic to decipher them. The part that refers to Ahtohallan as "magic's source" reveals that it isn't only the source of memories but of magic, hence why it's located near the enchanted forest where the spirits of the elements reside. When Elsa traverses the caverns of Ahtohallan, the symbols of the spirits can be seen throughout, hinting at a connection between the two. The first line from *Myth: A Frozen Tale* backs this up by stating "From a magic as old as the glaciers, were born the spirits of air, fire, water, and earth." This magic that the spirits were born from may have come from Ahtohallan (the reference to "glaciers" could be a subtle hint at this). The spirits got their magic from Ahtohallan in ages passed, and the two worked in tandem to create all the climactic magical events of the world. The last part of the note, "Elsa's source," reinforces this. As I described in Chapter 3, the power to manipulate ice and freeze water is essential for revealing memories, and this power, formed from the magic of Ahtohallan, is what the spirits gifted Elsa. The fact that Iduna and Agnarr had put the parchment with this note in the water-proof compartment along with the map must mean they considered it important; that importance being the reveal that Ahtohallan is actually frozen over from the ice age when for so long it was thought to be a river. Iduna's note could be a translation of the runes or just related information she wanted to document on the same parchment (but the fact that her note is written so cryptically makes me think it's a translation).



It's difficult to see, but the spirit symbols are actually present under the ice of Ahtohallan's entrance, hinting at a connection between the two

More information about Ahtohallan can be found in the "All is Found" lullaby referenced a few times in the movie. As I discussed earlier, the ages went by and the truth about Ahtohallan became lost to time until it was no more than a myth, often taking the form of a

lullaby sung to Northuldra children. The words of the lullaby give us more insight into its attributes, so I'm going to go into each line in detail:

"Where the north wind meets the sea, there's a river full of memory"

"Sleep, my darling, safe and sound, for in this river all is found"

This part describes Ahtohallan's location as being in the seas to the north, as well as its main magical element of containing memories. Saying that "all is found" in this river again references the fact that it contains all memories, and therefore, all truths can be found there.

"In her waters, deep and true, lay the answers and a path for you"

This line continues the theme of answers and paths to truth being found in Ahtohallan. This is also the first line that gives it a female pronoun, implying that people viewed it as a "goddess" of sorts in ancient times.

"Dive down deep into her sound, but not too far or you'll be drowned"

This line is the most important one as it's heard more than once throughout the movie to emphasize the risk Elsa eventually takes to discover the truth. We can infer a lot about how memories are revealed in Ahtohallan based on Elsa's time there. All the memories she sees are either of her own memories or of people close to her, like Anna and her parents. I think it's logical to conclude that all memories exist in Ahtohallan, but it takes more effort to find memories farther removed from your life. This is why, at first, Elsa initially created "easy" memories – the ones very close to her experiences. But finding

memories further away from your own provides more risk. The further away those memories are from you, i.e., memories of someone you don't know, memories from a long time ago, or memories that very few people know about, can be considered "deep" memories that require going further and



The first memories Elsa reveals are her own and those of people close to her

further into the depths to uncover, running the risk of going "too far." Ahtohallan's memories are different from the memories Elsa revealed in the forest and the shipwreck. She froze the memories that existed in those places specifically, whereas Ahtohallan contains memories unbounded by time and space, but with the risk of going too deep. This is why she had to go to such lengths to find out what really happened with King Runeard. Not only was this a memory from someone she never actually met from decades ago, but it was a secret and very short-lived memory only a couple people ever knew about, none currently living. But even though Elsa has ice magic, there's no reason to assume she's invulnerable to other ice magic, especially the "ultimate" magic straight from the original source – Ahtohallan. This is why even she succumbed to the consequences of going too far into deep memories. The lullaby states "not too far or you'll be drowned," but since

Ahtohallan is a glacier now, you get frozen instead. Like so many other high tier magical entities in the world of fantasy stories, there's no concrete explanation for why Ahtohallan functions this way, but a plausible reason is that, if it were easy for a single being to take in all the memories of the world without



A deep memory from Ahtohallan, indicated by its surrounding darkness

consequence, it would be too overwhelming – a literal example of the expression "too much information." If that being were human, the sheer amount of magical power that would flow into them from so much knowledge would be overbearing, possibly making them lose their humanity and crumble under so much stimulation. So restrictions on how far one can go to reveal "deep" memories were put in place.

"Yes, she will sing to those who'll hear, and in her song, all magic flows"

"But can you brave what you most fear? Can you face what the river knows?"

The line about Ahtohallan singing a magical song that only some will hear refers to the fact that only certain individuals will hear the "spirit call" that summons them there. In Elsa's case, as I discussed in the Chapter 2, only she could hear it because of her magic, and it was the spirit of her mother lingering in Ahtohallan that called her there. The fact that this same scenario is described in the lullaby means that this could have also been the case for a previous fifth spirit from ages ago. Being brave and facing what the river knows is the simple notion that being confronted with memories isn't always pleasant.

"Where the north wind meets the sea, there's a mother full of memory"

"Come, my darling, homeward bound, when all is lost, then all is found"

Describing Ahtohallan as a "mother" again emphasizes its status as a "goddess" during the time this lullaby came about. For the one who is called there, reaching it is "homeward bound" in the sense that they can finally understand why they need to be there by revealing memories – when all seems lost, all truth can be found in Ahtohallan.

Chapter 6— *A Bridge Has Two Sides*

Elsa continues to encounter memories of herself and her family inside Ahtohallan. She sees images of her parents that prove the things she had discovered since coming to the forest, about her mother saving her father and that her mother was Northuldra. She even catches a glimpse of herself singing "Let It Go," to which she cringes at first but then smiles at the fond memory. Eventually she gets her first look at a "deeper" memory in the form of her grandfather revealing his plot to use the dam against the Northuldra. She only gets a short encounter with it before it fades back into the abyss of the glacier. Elsa decides to follow it, using her magic to open a path further into Ahtohallan's depths. As she continues through, she hears the words of warning from her mother's lullaby echo in the chambers (this could have either been in her head or it could have been Iduna's spirit from within Ahtohallan trying to warn her that she's heading into "too far" territory). Along with this, she also hears the treacherous words of her grandfather saying that "the dam will weaken their land so they will have to turn to me."

Finally, Elsa reaches the precipice overlooking Ahtohallan's deep abyss where the most hidden memories lie. She hesitates for a moment, knowing that once she jumps down into the pit, she may not be able to get out. She understands now that her grandfather's

intentions for the dam were not what they had seemed...but what happened after that? If he was so secretive about his plan, how did the fighting start? These burning questions and a desire to see the truth through to the very end, made her decide to take the risk and leap down into the abyss.

Once there, she sees the full

memory play out in front of her. On one end is everyone enjoying reindeer riding, while on the other end, happening simultaneously, is the Northuldra leader expressing his concern about the dam to a dismissive Runeard. Then, a short while later, as the leader is by himself, Runeard comes up behind him and attacks him. At that moment, Elsa knew exactly what had happened – when the leader became too suspicious, Runeard decided to get rid of him and attacked him. Not only was Arendelle the side at fault, but they were also the ones who attacked first. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, this would constitute a memory that risks "going too far" because it's from someone she never met, from long before she was born, and, more importantly, it's a memory that existed for a



Elsa follows the memory as it flows into Ahtohallan's abyss

very short amount of time because the only two people who knew about it, the Northuldra leader and Runeard, died soon after. Before she freezes completely, Elsa uses the last of her powers to consolidate this memory into a final blast of magic to send to Anna. Although there isn't any way for her to know where Anna is at this time, it's likely her magic has a special connection to Olaf since he's also created from it. She knew wherever Anna is, Olaf shouldn't be far, so she sent the blast of magic to connect to wherever his magic was at the time.

As Elsa's magic blows into the cave that Anna and Olaf are wandering around in, it materializes into the sights and sounds of the memory. The voice of Runeard stating "the dam will weaken their land" and the Northuldra leader pleading "King Runeard, the dam is hurting the forest," reverberate inside the walls as the magic takes the form of an ice sculpture of the final scene Elsa saw. Between the words she heard and the scene that lay before her, Anna realizes what had happened: the dam wasn't a gift, it was a trick by her grandfather to harm the forest and the Northuldra (similar to the ice sculpture of their father when he was young, she recognizes her grandfather from various paintings and portraits she had seen in the castle). When she then thinks back on how everyone in Arendelle was mysteriously evacuated by the spirits' magic, and her conversation with Kristoff earlier about how everything on the fjord would be flooded should the dam fall, she knows what it all must have been leading up to – the dam needs to be destroyed in order to truly mend the past wrong. But before she and Olaf can take the next step, the magic within Olaf starts to fade away and Anna's worst fear is realized: Elsa went too far into Ahtohallan and has been lost forever. The magic keeping Olaf alive drifts away in the form of ice and snowflakes, slowly wafting out through an opening in the cave. Gale takes notice of this and gathers Olaf's remains in a small whirlwind, then deposits them in a cave under a waterfall. Perhaps as a show of respect, Gale also gathers some periwinkles in her wind that were growing nearby and places them over the pile of snow that was once Olaf.

This climactic part of *Frozen II*, where Elsa chooses to sacrifice herself for the truth, has sparked a criticism I've seen more than

once. The spirits knew the dam was harming the forest and that the truth could only be found in the deepest part of Ahtohallan. I discussed why the spirits themselves didn't destroy the dam in Chapter 3, but by setting up Elsa's mission of going to Ahtohallan to reveal the hidden memories of the past, they were knowingly sending her to her death, creating a bad moral of "seek the truth and you'll be punished." If the spirits knew that



Gale gathers Olaf's snow, which is now devoid of magic, along with some nearby periwinkles

finding the necessary memory in Ahtohallan would lead to Elsa's demise, then their plan wouldn't make sense – how could she act on her discovery of the truth if she immediately freezes to death? However, this interpretation is overlooking a very key element: Anna's importance in the story.

When Honeymaren explains the fifth spirit to Elsa, she describes it as a bridge between humans and the magic of nature. This makes it seem like Elsa herself is the bridge, since she's a human with magic. But as she says to Anna at the end, a bridge has two sides and their mother had two daughters. The spirits knew that magic alone wouldn't be enough. They knew that in order to discover such deeply hidden memories, one would have no choice but to "go too far" into Ahtohallan. If Elsa were to do this alone, she still would have discovered the truth and would have had to sacrifice herself to do it...and in doing that, who would be there to act on the truth and destroy the dam? Even if she was able to relay the message back to the others via ice magic sculptures the way she did for Anna, would someone like Mattias who's still bitter towards the Northuldra and fiercely loyal to Arendelle go through with destroying the dam? Even if Yelena and the other Northuldra got Elsa's message, they were already convinced that Arendelle was at fault. The whole idea was that someone from Arendelle needed to acknowledge the wrongdoing of their kingdom and carry out the task of destroying the dam. That's why Anna had to be there. Elsa was the part of the bridge that used magic to discover the truth and Anna was the human side that had to carry it out. It was no accident that the spirits gifted Iduna with two daughters for this very reason. Not only were the spirits aware of Elsa's magical status throughout her whole life, but they no doubt kept tabs on Anna too. In order for the



Elsa tells Anna that "a bridge has two sides" and their "mother had two daughters"

sisters to be a proper "bridge" to carry out this great task, the bond between them had to be solidified. And there was no greater example of their powerful love than the events of the first *Frozen* where Elsa obediently sacrificed her freedom in order to protect Anna and everyone else, and Anna chose to sacrifice her life to save Elsa despite how many times Elsa turned away from her. As terrible as the accident from their childhood was, it did serve one good purpose of cementing their love for each other when their circumstances were trying to tear them apart. By the time Elsa was able to hear her mother calling her from Ahtohallan, the bond between the sisters was as strong as ever, allowing them to pass through the mist and take on the mission that had been prepared for them. And this doesn't just apply to the final goal of discovering the truth and destroying the dam. Because having magical powers made Elsa so different from others, she needed someone to support her so she could

sisters to be a proper "bridge" to carry out this great task, the bond between them had to be solidified. And there was no greater example of their powerful love than the events of the first *Frozen* where Elsa obediently sacrificed her freedom in order to protect Anna and everyone else, and Anna

develop confidence in her uniqueness, allowing her to keep a balance of her "magic" and "human" sides. Elsa is the embodiment of the fifth spirit, but the bridge part of it comes from Anna. This all goes back to the major emphasis the filmmakers have made about Elsa being a mythical character, Anna being a fairy tale character, and how, similar to the first *Frozen*, Elsa would have the typical tragic fate of many myths were it not for Anna's fairy tale influence saving the day. The spirits knew Elsa could not have succeeded in her goal, and her emotional progression leading up to it, without help, which is why they influenced Anna's birth as well.

Even though it meant flooding her homeland, Anna chose to act on the truth and destroy the dam, coaxing the angry earth giants into chasing her towards it. She later runs into Kristoff, who had been waiting and wandering around in the woods. Even though we don't see much of this scenario play out, we can assume Kristoff had more or less stayed in the same area where she'd left him, hoping that she'd come back and that nothing bad had happened to her, Elsa, or Olaf. Likewise, Anna and Elsa discussed leaving Kristoff behind when they were headed to the shipwreck. They must have felt bad about it, but Elsa knew time was of the essence when the earth giants sensed her magic that night, and Anna hoped they wouldn't be away too long and Kristoff would forgive them for leaving him so abruptly. Despite his overwhelming relief at seeing her again, Kristoff had noticed that Anna was purposely trying to get the earth giants to follow her. Although he wanted to know why, he knew it was more important that he helped her with whatever she was doing, so he asks "what do you need?" to which she replies that she needs to get to the dam. Once there, she manages to convince Mattias to let her pass through despite his sworn loyalty to protect Arendelle. Since he didn't question the safety of the citizens now that a flood was heading their way, we can infer that he and Anna must have had a discussion off-screen about this, likely during the scene at the Northuldra village. When they were talking about various topics relating to Arendelle that night, she must have also mentioned that everyone from Arendelle had been evacuated to the cliffs nearby for some unknown reason – a reason that is now known. Now that Anna has every intention of destroying the dam, the spirits have no issue helping her by having the earth giants chuck their giant boulders at it. As soon as the dam begins to crumble, the earth giants stop their assault mid-throw. At that moment, they knew that the deed that had been weighing on the forest for over 30 years had finally been done.

As the dam falls, the symbol of the spirits flashes in the sky, signifying the momentous event (as mentioned in Chapter 2,



Since the dam was starting to crumble, the earth giants don't throw their last boulder

because there's a fifth spirit at this point in time, the middle part of the symbol flashes too). The spirits reward the bravery of both sisters by reviving Elsa, who could then use her powers to save Arendelle. The spirits use their magic to melt the bottom layer of Ahtohallan's abyss, causing Elsa to unfreeze. As she falls into the waters of the Dark Sea below, she's saved by the Nokk, who rushes her back to Arendelle on the heels of the giant tidal wave caused by the dam's collapse. The mist was already lifting at this point, allowing them to take the straightest course back to Arendelle. Even though the wave had a head start, the Nokk is much faster and is able to catch up, allowing Elsa to create a giant barrier of ice to block the wave from hitting Arendelle. In a dazzling display of ice crystals, Elsa breaks down the barrier as the wave falls back and away from the kingdom.

An interesting thing to note during this scene is that Elsa's ice decorations are still present on Arendelle Castle. Some have theorized that this is because anything outside the mist is unaffected by what happens inside. Since Elsa froze to death inside the mist, nothing containing her magic outside of it would fade away like Olaf did (which means that this theory implies that Ahtohallan is within the mist too). However, I'm more inclined to the interpretation that every magical object Elsa created did fade away when she died. It doesn't make sense that her magic would still be able to exist unchanged just because it was outside the mist...if her life isn't sustaining that magic anymore, then what is? Plus, since I'm considering "Frozen II: The Deluxe Junior Novelization" as a source, there's an additional scene that describes Elsa's ice palace, as well as the ice statues she made in the forest, flaking away and breaking apart after she froze, their remains floating away into the sky like Olaf's did. Elsa's creations don't necessarily disappear or completely melt into water when she dies. Since Olaf's snow remained intact the whole time, we can assume it was the same with the castle decorations and everything else. The magic in them faded away, but the actual ice and snow remained in a kind of suspended animation. They lost the "shape" the magic gave them, which was restored once Elsa's magic was revived. The reason the ice decorations on the palace revived when she did, but Olaf didn't, has to do with the fact that Olaf is comprised of a different kind of magic – a magic that has memory. Since the ice decorations are only objects, they were automatically put back in place once Elsa's magic returned to them, which happened as soon as Elsa was brought back to life.

But Olaf is a living thing, and thus more complex in his construction, which was why Elsa had to consciously revive him and rebuild his "water memories." The post-credits scene for *Frozen II* showing Olaf telling an abridged version of the story to Marshmallow and the snowgies reinforces this when



When Elsa was revived, her non-living ice creations, like the decorations adorning the palace, were restored

he ends on the line "...water has memory and thus, I live! And so do you," to which Marshmallow happily shouts "We live! We live!" implying that they also had to be "manually" brought back to life for the same reasons Olaf did.

One of the most common criticisms I've seen of *Frozen II's* ending both from fans and general movie reviewers, is the fact that Arendelle was spared from being flooded. It's been called a "cop-out" and that it amounts to nothing being sacrificed in the end after all that build-up. But why was a sacrifice needed? Thanks to deleted content from "The Art of Frozen II" book and bonus features on the home video release, we know that in an early version of the movie, Arendelle did get flooded, or at least the castle did. But whether this supposed "sacrifice" was something early in the story's development or not, I think the outcome we got now is just as valid. The final version of the movie had no hinting of any sacrificing that needed to be made, only about discovering the truth and doing the next right thing, which is just what Anna and Elsa did. But in a way, they did make sacrifices, or at least they intended to, with Elsa going too far into Ahtohallan so she could uncover the truth, knowing it could lead to her death, and Anna destroying the dam, knowing it means destruction for Arendelle. And because they were willing to go that far to set things right, the spirits rewarded them by saving Elsa, who could then save Arendelle. While some are in favor of the alternative

message of "a sacrifice must be made to right a past wrong even if the current generation had nothing to do with it," the message we actually got of "if you do what is right and true even if it means making a sacrifice, things may still turn out better in the end" has just as



The spirits reward both sisters for doing the right thing by saving Elsa, who could then save Arendelle

much merit. As I've described in previous chapters, all the spirits wanted was for Arendelle to acknowledge the wrong they did in the past and correct it by destroying the dam. Although the spirits did evacuate the Arendellians just in case something went wrong (like Elsa couldn't make it there in time), there's no evidence that wiping out the kingdom was also required to correct the past.

Once Elsa sees that Arendelle is safe, she rides the Nokk back to the forest to make sure things are also okay over there. It might seem like Elsa is able to travel between Arendelle and the forest exceptionally fast, but we can't confirm exactly how far the distance is between the two. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, it takes our heroes about a day to get to the forest from Arendelle, but they were obviously going at a much slower pace and we don't know how many stops they made along the way. They also had to maneuver through terrain like woods and plains, while Elsa's route with the Nokk was just a straight,

unobstructed run through the water. With all this in mind, and going by what was happening on Anna's end while Elsa travelled to and from Arendelle, I would estimate it taking a few hours for her to make the round trip. During those hours, Anna was regrouping with Mattias, and later on, with Yelena and the rest of the Northuldra. She also had to take some time to calm down after all that happened and break the terrible news to Kristoff about what happened to Elsa and Olaf. Finally, they slowly made their way back to the entrance of the forest as the last layers of the mist faded away. Although Kristoff wanted to comfort Anna as much as he could, he also sensed that she wanted to be alone, so he reluctantly let her walk away from the group as the reindeer and everyone else celebrated the reopening of the forest. As Anna tried to hold back more tears at the thought of how different her life will be from now on, Gale gets her attention by gathering some of Elsa's ice crystals and leading her to a ledge overlooking the ocean where Elsa is on her way back.

Now that Elsa is fully connected to the spirits, their magic flows into her and she receives a lot of information from them as she rides back to Arendelle. Among the things they convey to her is what I discussed previously: their decision to save both Elsa and Arendelle from the flood because both she and Anna chose to do the right thing, and the fact that their mother had two daughters because they're both two sides of the "bridge" that comprises the complete fifth spirit. Elsa tells this to Anna when they're reunited, and after another reunion with Kristoff and Sven, Gale flies around her, probably telling her about Olaf because she then asks Anna "do you want to build a snowman?" Gale excitedly whooshes back to the cave where she had put Olaf's remains and brings them back to Elsa, allowing

her to rebuild the snowman's memories and bring him back to life. When they return to the forest, Anna lets Mattias know that Arendelle was spared while Elsa tells Yelena and Honeymaren about Ahtohallan. Since Elsa's arrival in the forest, she's confirmed the existence of a fifth spirit and Ahtohallan, two



Gale retrieves Olaf's remains from the cave so Elsa can revive him

things long thought to be only legends in Northuldra culture. Not only that, but she's made friends with all the spirits. Because of all this, Honeymaren is fascinated and suggests that Elsa belongs in the enchanted forest. There's this view among some fans that the term fifth "spirit" is meant to be literal – that Elsa has somehow ascended into godhood when she reached Ahtohallan. There's no evidence to support this as Elsa's "transformation" wasn't any different than her transformation in "Let It Go" from the first *Frozen* besides the fact that the spirits lent their magic for her new dress. Nothing about her seemed "god-like" thereafter. She didn't ascend to some astral plane or become transparent and floating like

a ghost or lose any of her human emotions. She's obviously not immortal either, as her ice magic was still no match for the power of Ahtohallan that froze her to death. Her magic was simply upgraded and her connection to this new world of magic and the spirits that dwell within, was simply stronger. The term "spirit" in "fifth spirit" is used very loosely. The whole idea of it is that she's not supposed to be a god like the other spirits. She's supposed to be a bridge between humans and the magic of nature. Being a human with magic rather than a god with magic fits that role perfectly.

Frozen II's epilogue is arguably the most polarizing part of the movie among fans because it hinges on the lingering question of "now that the past has been resolved and the forest is free, why does Elsa choose to stay in the forest instead of returning home to Arendelle?" There's also this idea that Elsa was "forced" to become the fifth spirit because doing so was the only way to get the voice to leave her alone. This is true, but only up to a certain point. Once she reaches Ahtohallan, the voice stops. From then on, she could choose what she wanted to do. There was nothing stopping her from returning to her life as queen of Arendelle after that, so why the big change? Again, as I discussed in Chapter 2, during her many years of isolation, Elsa wondered what greater purpose her powers could serve and whether magical beings like herself existed anywhere else. Even after she reconciled with Anna and got used to her life as queen, that yearning never quite went away. After her adventure in *Frozen II*, she not only found that answer, but became a major part of this magical world she had only dreamed about. As much as she loves Arendelle and enjoyed being queen, suddenly dropping this newly discovered world of magical mysteries and the freedom to use her powers without restraint, in favor of returning to her queenly tasks of hobnobbing with diplomats and solving civil disputes, just didn't feel right...especially not when there's another perfectly capable Arendellian queen right by her side. There's no doubt Anna helped Elsa during her three years as queen and took part in many royal duties. Although she wasn't queen herself, Anna learned a lot from observing Elsa and participating in her daily tasks over the years. Of course, Elsa could have chosen to stay in Arendelle and visit the forest instead of the other way around, but being queen, a good queen at least, is a dedicated position. Trying to stay on top of all her queenly responsibilities while going back and forth to the forest all the time wouldn't amount to the kind of quality she wanted for Arendelle royalty. But having someone like Anna who's already familiar with royal

activities and loves Arendelle with all her heart, would be perfect for the role. Like with Elsa taking on her new role, there's no evidence that Anna was "forced" to be queen against her will. We see nothing but glowing happiness from her as



Anna greeting the people gathered for the statue unveiling

she greets her people and unveils the statue (and just to clear up any confusion, what we see in the epilogue is certainly not Anna's coronation as some fans think. There are no dignitaries from other countries present, nor is there nearly as much pomp and circumstance as at Elsa's coronation. Kai was simply announcing Anna's presence for the unveiling of the statue, with the tent serving as a sort of dressing room where she could make preparations before meeting with her people, as well as its pedestal serving as a stage where she could address them as a crowd. After she unveiled the statue, she probably made a speech from the pedestal about how Arendelle and Northuldra will now work on their newfound union. Her actual coronation either took place already, or will soon).

Without the pressure of having to balance her duties as queen on top of this new world of magic she discovered, Elsa is experiencing a sense of freedom she never had before. She can spend as much time as she wants learning about the magic of the forest and the spirits, as well as helping them reconnect with the Northuldra after decades of discord between them. Likewise, Anna is back in the land she loves, influencing the lives of her people even more now that she's queen, and ready to take the next step in her relationship with Kristoff. The sisters now have the best of both worlds. They're living the lives they love, and since there's no boundaries between the lands anymore, they can visit each other as often as they like. We see from the letter Anna writes to Elsa at the end that a family night of charades is not uncommon.

What I find interesting about the epilogue is that we get no clear indication that the two nations are suddenly "friends. We don't see the Northuldra visiting Arendelle or vice versa. A couple of Frozen II storybooks revealed that the statue unveiling took place



Only Arendellians are present, implying that this is only the beginning of mending their relationship with the Northuldra

weeks after the forest was freed (the main story took place during fall and it's winter in the epilogue). That's not nearly enough time for the two sides to feel comfortable mingling with each other after decades of animosity. After so many years of the Northuldra being despised by Arendelle, there's a lot of relationship mending to do between the two lands. But Elsa's statement that "we'll continue to do this together" and, later, Anna proclaiming as the statue of Iduna and Agnarr is unveiled, that their "land and people are now connected by love," can only imply that the sisters will be working together to restore the relationship between Arendelle and the Northuldra – the two lands of their heritage, first connected by the love between their parents, and now will be mended by the love between two sisters.



Afterword

Frozen II has opened my eyes to many things both in terms of fandom and how the filmmakers, at least for Disney Animation, relate to the work they do. From the many interviews I've read of Jennifer Lee and the team discussing *Frozen II*, as well as watching all six episodes of the "Into the Unknown" documentary, I've come to realize that their style of storytelling is really not about creating the concrete world-building that many fans seek. I recall Jen stating in a podcast that she interprets the voice to be Iduna, that she thinks the accident with Elsa's powers took place the night Agnarr told the story about the forest, and that she thinks Anna and Elsa are both, in a sense, the fifth spirit. She doesn't describe her interpretation of these vaguer aspects of the story as the definite answers, even though the world of *Frozen* is her creation. This made me think back to the many literature classes I took in school, where I would read a poem or story, create my own interpretation of it which I found enjoyable, only to have the teacher mark me down and say "no, that's not what the author is trying to say." How would the teacher know if Robert Frost would disagree with my interpretation of "Birches"? Even if he had a different interpretation himself, he would probably accept my interpretation as long as I back it up, making it valid. I think most good authors would rather their work be enjoyed even if those enjoying it see things differently. And that's the sense I get with Jennifer Lee and the *Frozen II* team. They made the movie for others to enjoy and interpret first and foremost, with their own personal interpretations being secondary.

One could find very cynical, "realistic" reasons for the things I interpret in this book. For example, the reason Elsa's ice decorations are still on the palace after she froze to death, is because the animators didn't have time to remove them during the final months of production. Or, the reason Arendelle didn't get flooded is because Disney is planning to

create *Frozen* lands, complete with Arendelle Castles, at their theme parks. These and many other reasons behind the things I interpret could very well be true. But ultimately, does that really matter? We can't help it if animators make mistakes or some loopholes in the script don't get patched up. For me, it makes a work more enjoyable to create my own reasons behind these things so as not to shatter the immersive value of the movies and characters I love. You can choose to be turned off by these "flaws" and walk away, or, if you already love the characters and their world, create your own interpretations for why things are the way they are to keep the joy going. There's no right or wrong decision here, I just prefer the latter.

In all the fandoms I partake in, I always try to make myself open to different interpretations of the characters and story even if they don't fully agree with my own (especially if it comes from the original creators). What typically drives me to something is if I like the canon characters and story presented to me, and I tend to stick with that. After reading through "The Art of Frozen II" and watching the "Into the Unknown" documentary, I have even more appreciation for *Frozen II* now that I've seen how much work and dedication the filmmakers, animators, song writers, and everyone else on the team had for this movie. Making a great movie when you have to coordinate so many different facets and get hundreds of people on the same page, on top of the pressure of being a sequel to such a successful movie, is enormously difficult. With all those hurdles they had, I think they ended up doing a very good job. Even though *Frozen II* went in a direction I wasn't expecting for the story, as long as I still feel love for the characters and the franchise's universe, I'll work with that. As is obvious from everything I've written here, I've already adjusted my headcanons and filled in gaps the creators made with my own interpretations. I started doing this the first time I watched the movie over six months ago, and in doing so, it's brought me much happiness. And that's what it's all about.

Currently we don't know what the future has in store for the *Frozen* franchise, but going by how successful *Frozen II* was for Disney, I have the feeling it's not a question of "if" so much as a question of "when" and "in what form." The sequel left a wealth of possibilities for new stories, like how Anna and Elsa will work together to mend the relationship between the two lands, how Anna is adjusting to her new role and upcoming marriage to Kristoff, and whether Elsa still has more work to do for her role as the fifth spirit (in the epilogue, we see that she has frozen the Dark Sea, making it easier for her to ride the Nokk to Ahtohallan, so perhaps there's more for her to do in terms of deciphering its memories). Whether we get a third movie, more animated shorts, or even a series, is still up in the air, but I think it's possible. Of course, the next official work could throw many of the interpretations I presented in this book completely out the window – which is fine since I can always make a second edition! Even if we have to wait another six years, or more, I look forward to seeing what future adventures await our beloved sister queens.