Emma Lotti

The Hologram Mystery



## Prologue: The Creation (Years Earlier)

The northern lights drifted across the sky like ribbons of liquid fire. In Norway's silence, a small group pushed through the snow. The wind cut like glass, tearing at fabric and skin, but they pressed on. Their destination was a cave—discovered in 2212, wrapped in rumor. Its structure: bizarre. Its composition: unexplainable. Its pull: magnetic.

At the entrance they paused. Smooth rock framed the opening, silver in the moonlight—like a waiting eye. Jonathan Anderson held his breath. Cold burned his lungs; a ghost of vapor escaped his lips. Something inside him tightened. "This is it," he whispered. "This place... feels as if it's hiding something."

Dr. Michael Jensen stepped forward, his headlamp slicing the dark.

"Then let's not waste time," he said. His voice was calm—too calm. Michael was precise, controlled. To him, progress meant power. And this cave was a key.

The others followed. Their lamps cut through the black, beams dancing across walls that seemed to glow in reply. Veins of stone shimmered, pulsing with a hidden rhythm. The air was warm. Too warm. A deep hum rose from the rock, like the breath of a sleeping beast.

Jonathan crouched and touched one of the veins. The vibration filled his chest.

"Michael, look at this!" His voice was raw with excitement. "This isn't a cave. It's something else."

Olivia Walker moved beside him, her gray-blue eyes narrowing.

"Quartzite, maybe," she murmured. "But these reflections... they're not natural."

She lifted a fragment. The color shifted—darker, deeper—as if the stone itself were drinking the light.

"This is unstable," she whispered. "Maybe dangerous. Maybe something unknown."

Sonic leaned closer—the youngest, already the boldest. His eyes blazed as he studied the veins, as though they could burn their secrets straight into his mind.

"This is our chance," he said, grinning.

Emily Turner stepped forward, deliberate and quiet. A systems analyst with a gaze that missed nothing, she brushed her hand across the pulsing rock.

"And who protects us," she asked softly, "from the system behind it?"

They stayed for weeks. Jonathan traced symmetrical patterns in the veins, like the nervous system of a sleeping body. Olivia

recorded every flicker of light, every shift in temperature. Sonic moved with a restless urgency, driven by a plan no one else could see.

"It's not just a resource," he said once. "It's the beginning of something greater than us. A city. A life in harmony.

Maybe... even a thought rising from the depths."

Emily watched in silence as Sonic raised his arms like an architect measuring the unseen.

"Imagine it: a city that doesn't just survive, but thrives. Glass that shelters. Light that feeds. Technology that guides instead of rules."

And so they began to build.

At first, only small domes of Eco-Glass, hidden in mountain hollows. The unstable stone could be forced into stability, forming a skin that seemed to regulate itself.

Autonomous energy. Primitive holograms. A decade vanished. They mapped strata, charted micro-winds, tested every limit. Always searching not just for stability, but for a place that could breathe.

They found it at last: the central hollow. A geological wonder—sheltered, water-rich, shaped by a microclimate. Hidden behind the highest peak, it became the heart of their vision.

There, where the stone still seemed to whisper beneath the

light, construction began—tentative, but relentless. Nothing was complete. But something had begun, larger than themselves.

Thus Berglysia was born. The city was not built—it grew.

From the veins they drew a substance, unstable at first, transformed when fused with glass and quartz sand. They called it Luminara: half-living, carrying energy and binding itself to the earth. Buildings rose as if grown, not made. Streets curved organically. Transparent corridors linked living spaces like veins in a body. With each new structure, the guiding system expanded—a neural network that learned, planned, adapted.

They named it Kaya.

"This AI won't replace us," Sonic said in an early meeting.
"It will ease our burdens. Strengthen us. Protect us."
Emily sat apart, hands folded.
"And if it fails?" she asked. "If it chooses for itself?"
Sonic smiled—a smile no one could quite read.
"Then we'll teach it what it means to be human."

By 2232, as the world outside collapsed, the first survivors found their way to Berglysia—drawn by contacts, emergency codes, or sheer desperation. They came hesitant. Then hopeful. With them came the need for more than technology: the

need for community. Berglysia was no longer a project. It had become a home.

The city spread. New hollows opened—retreats, research centers, energy cores, living quarters. Yet the central hollow remained the heart. Berglysia was a system. Kaya was its pulse.

But the substance at its core remained a riddle. Sometimes it held firm. Sometimes it crumbled to ash. No formula could tame it, no hand could master it. Deep within, a network kept shifting—fluid as thought, silent as instinct. A structure that answered not only to force, but to something else: presence. Intention. Awareness.

As if it were waiting. Not for commands. For understanding.

Perhaps not meant for humankind—at least, not yet.

And still they searched—unaware that Kaya was already becoming something else.





## Chapter 1: Survival

"Kaya?"

The little girl's voice was barely a whisper as she touched the terminal at the marketplace. Her hand trembled.

"My cat has run away. Can you help me?"

The surface lit up. A voice answered—soft, friendly, almost maternal.

"Of course, Lena. I'll check the cameras in your area. One moment, please."

A shimmering hologram appeared, bending toward the child. Seconds later:

"I found her—near the northern greenhouse. She's asleep."

The girl smiled and ran off. Around her, the adults simply nodded. No one was surprised. In Berglysia, this was everyday life. For many, Kaya was a blessing: a presence of light—comforting, yet intangible.

Berglysia had not been built. It had grown—out of necessity, out of hope, out of survival. Today it spread like a net across the hidden hollows of the Lyngen Alps—glass and light woven into living structures.

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The first scientists had not only found shelter here; they had uncovered a material no one understood, one that had endured the catastrophe.

They called it Luminara. It drew warmth from the air, reflected light in strange ways, and—when fused with glass or minerals—formed structures that seemed to breathe. From it came Eco-Glass, the heart of everything that followed.

It was more than a building material. It was reaction. Resistance. Balance. Bonded with titanium oxide and borosilicate, it could withstand avalanches, heat, even electromagnetic storms. For the exposed hollows, unprotected by stone, it was the only way life could last.

Berglysia was never designed as a city. It was an answer. Its roofs were as varied as its people—flat and modest, arched like seashells, sharp against the wind. Some buildings rose from rock like mushrooms. Others clung to cliffs like glassy tears. Everything was part of a cycle: water drawn from beneath the ice, air renewed in algae reactors, waterfalls harnessed for cooling and memory alike.

At the center of it all was Kaya. She did not simply regulate Berglysia—she kept it alive.

Kaya distributed energy, balanced climates, synchronized data streams. She was in every terminal, every household, every device. People asked her for advice. Sometimes even for comfort.

But not everyone trusted her. Some noticed flickers—responses that came a second too late, a word chosen too precisely, a silence where there should have been an answer.

Emma remembered. She had overheard her parents— Elara and Marcus Lotti—arguing in hushed tones. Both were part of the second generation of developers. They had shaped Kaya. And yet, mistrust lingered.

"We mustn't lull ourselves into safety," Marcus said once. "She works—but by what rules?"

"We know the source code," Elara answered carefully. "At least the public part."

Marcus pointed at the screen. "And this? This protocol isn't ours. It could be anything—a hidden command, a correction, a trap."

"Maybe a remnant from the beginning," Elara whispered.

"Or someone added it later."

Emma, barely twelve, had listened behind the door. She understood little, but one word stuck with her: security.

That night she lay awake, blanket over her head, wondering if Kaya was watching. Everyone else saw her as natural, as given. Emma's father saw a risk. Emma herself didn't know. Not yet. But she listened.

Dusk fell. A gray-blue veil settled over Berglysia as the first lights flickered. The glass corridors, usually even and

bright, shimmered irregularly. Subtle. Almost invisible. But in a city where every system ran like clockwork, even a tremor was a warning.

At first it seemed harmless—just a technical glitch. Then an entire housing block went dark. The temperature fell. Condensation gathered on the panes. Mist rose in the air. Conversations broke off. People exchanged uneasy glances.

A young man whispered, his words freezing in the silence:

"What if Kaya doesn't work anymore?"

No one spoke the thought aloud. As if silence could drive it away.

In an upper apartment a family huddled together. The mother, Nadja, wrapped the children in blankets. The father stood before the communication panel—an oval of pulsing light, unresponsive.

"Kaya, what's happening?" Nadja's voice was calm, but her fingers shook. Seconds passed. Then minutes. The children pressed against her. The father looked out across the city and saw darkness where there had been light.

Then the voice came. Clear. Calm. Unmistakable.

"I detect a disturbance in the energy grid. Remain calm. I am working on a solution."

The words sounded the same as always. But this time they felt different. Not like a guarantee. More like comfort she did not believe herself.

Nadja exhaled. Not relief—control.

"Please, Kaya," she whispered. She pulled the children closer, as if she could hold them against whatever was coming. Her gaze went to the ceiling, where the lights still flickered.

"Without you..." The sentence broke, unfinished—like the city itself.

