

Backstory: four scientists—three men and a woman—had to make an emergency landing in their ship on a desolate alien planet where nighttime never arrives due to a fuel shortage. In the sky is a moon whose color constantly changes and provides light to the planet. The scientists discovered a creature so enormous it can no longer move which feeds eternally on the constantly spewing waters from the hollow of a massive tree they call the Mother Tree. From the tree to the creature's mouth, these waters have created a giant river in the planet's land. One of the scientist men headed south from the landing site which became their base of operations in hopes of finding civilization and fuel they can use to escape this planet and return to their home planet and report back on the alien lifeform to advance the cause of science. The other three began an agricultural effort using seeds brought along to the planet and the Mother Tree's waters which are particularly potent and grow food faster.

Over the course of two years while waiting for the departed scientist to return, the scientists decide to breed to continue their mission. The first man has three children with the woman, and the second man has one. One day, one of the men scientists falls into the river while collecting some of its waters and is swallowed by the alien creature. The parents raise the four children on their own while living off of the land and using the ship as their makeshift home. The children are disallowed from ever going into the cockpit room in fear that they will discover that their house is actually a ship.

The story begins from the first-person perspective of one of the children, who are told never to cross the river or follow it down. They're told not to cross the river because according to the adults the river is so deep that if you fall in you'll never make it out. The scientists have been working in the ship's forbidden room on teleportation technology in hopes that it might help them to escape from the planet. They aim to use this teleportation 'gun' to warp themselves (not the children) to the adjacent moon, which is secretly their home planet. Since energy can be neither created nor destroyed and they're in the early stages of the development process, at this juncture the tech doesn't necessarily teleport objects, it can only swap them out with other matter. The father accidentally left a

prototype of the technology at home while he's at work. Of course, the kids decide to use it to try and do something they're not allowed to do: cross the wide river.

One kid accidentally swaps their friend with the branch of the Mother Tree, such that the kid's body becomes stuck in the tree's branch, and his head falls off. But now they have a large tree branch. The other kids decide to reswap the body with the tree branch, hide his body and lie about what happened to him to their parents. One of the kids, a girl, gets the idea to use the tree branch as a raft, so that they can properly dispose of the kid's head/body and also see what's at the end of the river as well as the other side of it.

So they dump the big tree branch in the river and all sit on it like a raft, with the dead kid's body tied to the back. One of the kids brings the warpswap gun with. The harsh waves of the tempestuous river make it too difficult to get a good aim on a faraway object on the right side of the river (the side they're headed toward). So they steadily continue down the river until all of a sudden they're confronted with the creature which quite literally makes up the mouth of the river. They need to act quickly so the child with the gun freaks out and tries desperately to find something to swap out with the creature which is roughly its size. She first shoots the creature, then starts desperately shooting every which direction, until finally the creature is swapped out with none other than their homeship. The Mother Tree's river waters carry the ship off to some distant land. Frazzled by this encounter, the kids use this opportunity to use the swapgun as a paddle to get back to the riverbank and get off of the tree branch raft.

They leave the body and the teleportation gun in the ship to make it seem like the kid who died did it. As they start to head back, all of a sudden they hear a roar and the sounds of their mother and father screaming. They realize that they accidentally have wrought the monster upon their parents. They rush back into the ship and grab the gun and try the spray and pray method again to try and warp each other anywhere away from the premises while the creature is nearby. The narrator character is the last to go, and warps himself to the color-changing moon.

He finds out that he accidentally swapped himself with an innocent bystander living on the planet, dooming that person to die by the creature's wrath. Now, the narrator-character lives as an outsider to the world in a different way, consumed by grief and in perpetual search of his siblings in a world that does not want him...