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Maxim Sofin

On the Blade of Destiny

Noir / Drama / Adventure



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Аннотация

НЕЗАКОННОЕ ПОТРЕБЛЕНИЕ НАРКОТИЧЕСКИХ СРЕДСТВ, ПСИХОТРОПНЫХ ВЕЩЕСТВ, ИХ АНАЛОГОВ ПРИЧИНЯЕТ ВРЕД ЗДОРОВЬЮ, ИХ НЕЗАКОННЫЙ ОБОРОТ ЗАПРЕЩЕН И ВЛЕЧЕТ УСТАНОВЛЕННУЮ ЗАКОНОДАТЕЛЬСТВОМ ОТВЕТСТВЕННОСТЬ.

For those who love atmospheric stories, but still seek deep meaning.

Adrian is a talented chef with a dark past, trying to hide from the world of shadows for the sake of love and family. But fate does not let go of those who have seen its inside.

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Book “On the Blade of Destiny”

About the Author:

Maxim Sofin — practicing psychologist since 2001 (family, sports, clinical). TV and Radio Psychology Expert. Writer. Speaker at All-Russian and International educational forums and congresses for psychologists and game practitioners. Member of the Russian Psychological Society. Master of Education, NLP Master.

Lived for 9 years in countries of Europe and Africa.

Author of courses: “Game Practitioner”, “Quantum-Matrix Constellations” (business, family, relationships).

Author of Transformative Psychological Games: “Quantum Matrix of Destiny”, “Matrix of Actions”.

Author of the project “Success in Life or Successful People”, which was held in orphanages, in joint trainings with Irina Hakamada, Oleg Roy, Batu Khasikov, Olga Shelest and many others.

Best Psychologist of Moscow in 2019).

Genre:

Philosophical Thriller / Noir / Drama / Adventure

Who is this book for:

For those who love atmospheric stories but are looking for a deeper meaning. For readers who value psychological depth, beautiful descriptions of food and travel, and believe that even in the darkest world, one can find a place for light.

The Essence of the Story:

This is the confession of a man who knew too much and stayed silent for too long. Adrian is a talented chef with a dark past, trying to hide from the world of shadows for the sake of love and family. But destiny does not let go of those who have seen its underside.

From the coasts of Spain to the rice fields of Vietnam, from the safes of Zurich to a family dinner in Tuscany — this is the path of a fugitive who understands: you cannot run from yourself. To find peace, you must not hide, but meet your demons face to face and serve them the bill.

Main Characters:

Adrian: Tall, reserved professional. His weapon is not a pistol, but a chef's knife and cold calculation. A man who learned to cook life out of chaos.

Lisa: His partner and conscience. A former victim of the system, turned strong woman. She is the anchor that prevents Adrian from sinking into the past.

Leyla: Ghost of the past. A pianist whose sacrifice became the foundation of the heroes' freedom. Symbol of inconsolable tragedy and supreme love.

The System (The Man in Grey / Marcos / Franco): Faceless evil, corruption and order bought with blood. An enemy who has no face, but is everywhere.

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Quote from the novel:

“Destiny is not a blade that cuts you. It is dough. You can make bread out of it, or you can make a flatbread. The main thing is not to be afraid to get your hands dirty with flour and not to be afraid of the fire.”

Part 1. Shadows of a Seaside City

Chapter 1. The Merchant of Warmth

Adrian is twenty-seven years old. He was a tall, handsome dark-haired man, possessing that rare, almost magnetic trait that women like, but which he himself did not notice in himself. His attractiveness lay not in the features of his face, but in his detachment. He never made the first call, never sought attention, and seemed like a self-sufficient island in the noisy ocean of human relationships. This independence irritated some and attracted others, but Adrian wore it like armor.

He lived in a European port city, where the sea smelled of salt and soft freshness, and the streets — of saffron, hashish, and expensive perfumes. All winds mixed here: Roma districts next to quarters of Moroccans and Algerians, Italians argued with Spaniards in the market squares, and at night all this melting pot turned into a set for a book like “Queen of the South”. Prohibited substances, prostitutes from all over the world, money, blood.

Adrian came here looking for work, but his business instinct suggested another path. He noticed a void in the rhythm of night life: girls working in clubs often went hungry or ate whatever. Adrian started cooking. Home food — hot rice, stewed

meat, aromatic soups — was packed into plastic containers and delivered in his old van to the clubs of the red-light district.

The food was inexpensive, but tasty. In a world where everything was sold, his cooking was the only act of selfless care. The girls bought it willingly, and some, in gratitude, danced for him on poles in empty halls. This did not excite him, rather it caused a quiet sadness. He saw in them not merchandise, but broken dolls, and this look distinguished him from the clients.

The owners of the establishments looked at him askance. Free dances for the cook violated the hierarchy. But soon they made him an offer that was hard to refuse without attracting attention.

— Cook for them in the house, — one of the pimps said, nodding towards the mansion where the girls lived. — We pay more. And also... they don't know the language. You will be their voice.

Thus Adrian became not just a cook. He became a translator, companion, nanny for adults who had lost their childhood. His life divided into day and night. During the day he bought products at the markets, bargaining with old Arabs, and at night he plunged into the sticky semidarkness of clubs, pulling girls out of toilets, where they forgot themselves with local guys, trying to drown melancholy with alcohol, coke, and foreign bodies.

It was hard, thankless work. But it was precisely this that made him invisible. People stopped seeing a threat in him. He became part of the furniture, part of the interior, part of the shadow.

Chapter 2. Lisa and the Door

The night city breathed damp fog onto Adrian's back as he closed the van door, smelling of cinnamon and fried rice. This scent of domestic comfort was his only alibi in a district where conscience was worth less than a bullet. It was precisely this dissonance that attracted the attention of the owner of the club "L'Ombra", Mr. Marcos.

Marcos was a man who didn't blink when making life and death decisions. He didn't need a cook. He needed a person capable of staying silent in three languages and inspiring trust in those accustomed to waiting for a knife in the back.

The turning point came on a rainy Tuesday. Adrian brought a batch of food for the staff when a complication arose in the back room. Lisa, a new girl from Eastern Europe, refused to go out to a client. She had locked herself in the dressing room, and security was ready to kick the door down with a sledgehammer.

Marcos stopped the fighters with a gesture. His gaze, heavy

and evaluating, fell on Adrian, who was standing with a container in his hands.

— Talk to her, — Marcos tossed out, lighting a cigarette. The smoke mixed with the damp air. — You seem safe. If she comes out in five minutes — you get a bonus. If not — you're just a cook who knocked on the wrong door today.

Adrian approached the door. He didn't knock loudly or threaten. He simply placed the plastic container with still-hot broth at the threshold, squatted down, and spoke in her native language. Calmly. Without a shadow of lust or judgment, those things that soaked the walls of this establishment through and through.

— It's cold in there, Lisa, — he said quietly. — The food will get cold.

His voice was devoid of emotion, but in this dryness Lisa heard something more than sympathy — she heard equality. In a world where she was a thing, she was spoken to like a person.

The lock clicked two minutes later. The girl came out, ignoring the security, and looked straight into Adrian's eyes. In that look there was so much unspoken pain and hope that Adrian felt something tremble inside him. This was the beginning of that

very love which in such cities always ends in tragedy. But for now, it was just a quiet understanding between two outcasts.

Marcos watched this scene from the semidarkness of the corridor. At that moment he realized: Adrian's culinary skills were merely a convenient cover for his true talent — the ability to control chaos with words.

Chapter 3. Keeper of Secrets

The club owner offered him a new role. Adrian became an intermediary, the one who settled conflicts between staff and guests before they escalated into violence.

His life changed drastically. The nights now belonged to the backstage of “L’Ombra”. He saw the underside of city life: politicians forgetting their ambitions under the influence of the moment, and criminals who sought consolation in confession to an accidental cook. Adrian became the keeper of the city's secrets, an invisible observer whose presence became a mandatory condition for tranquility in the establishment.

The philosophy of his existence became simple: to survive on the blade, you cannot press on it. You must glide.

However, such awareness carried a hidden threat. The more

he learned about Marcos's affairs and his high-ranking guests, the thinner the ice under his feet became. The thriller of his life gained momentum not through chases, but through silence.

One evening, while sorting supplies in the kitchen cabinet, Adrian discovered an envelope not intended for his eyes. Inside were documents linking the city administration with illegal operations in the port. Human smuggling, weapons, money laundering.

Adrian looked for a long time at the yellowed sheets under the light of the dim lamp. The noise of the working extractor hood in the empty kitchen seemed deafening. He understood: these papers were not just information, this was a death sentence or an entry ticket to a world where the rules were dictated not by Marcos, but by those who stood behind him.

Instead of hiding the envelope or destroying it, Adrian acted differently. He made strong coffee and sat at his work desk, laying the documents out before him. His plan began to ripen instantly. He did not intend to betray Marcos, but he didn't want to become an accomplice to a crime without insurance either.

Chapter 4. Deal in the Cold Kitchen

That same night, when the club filled with thick bass and the

smell of expensive tobacco, Adrian invited Marcos to talk in the cold storage. Among the meat carcasses and icy steam, he placed the envelope on the metal table.

— This was in my locker, — Adrian said calmly, looking the owner straight in the eyes. — Someone really wants me to see this. Or for you to think I stole it.

Marcos changed expression for a moment. A shadow of fury flashed in his gaze, his hand twitched, perhaps towards the holster under his jacket. But Adrian continued, without raising his voice:

— I am not going to use this against you. But I want to become not just an “intermediary”. If I keep your secrets, I must be part of the system, not its tool. Tools break. Partners survive.

This was a bluff, the highest form of controlling chaos with words. Adrian offered Marcos a deal: he would create an “information buffer” — a network among staff and guests that would filter such leaks before they became a problem. In exchange, Adrian demanded full autonomy and a share in the business that would ensure him a legal cover.

Marcos was silent for a long time. Only the hum of the freezers could be heard. Finally, he reached out and took the envelope.

— You are a risky man, Adrian. But in this city, only such people survive. From tomorrow you will have a new office. And new responsibility.

But Adrian knew something Marcos did not: before coming to the meeting, he had made copies of all the documents and handed them to the person he trusted most — the old greengrocer from the market, who was actually a retired investigator.

Now Adrian was playing a double game. He had become the right-hand man of the king of the night city, simultaneously preparing the ground so that in case of Marcos's collapse, he could walk away dry. His life had turned into a complex recipe, where the slightest error in proportions could lead to an explosion.

Chapter 5. The Man in Grey

A week later, a man in a grey suit entered “L’Ombra”, someone who had never been seen there before. He didn’t order alcohol, didn’t look at the girls. He simply sat at the bar and waited specifically for Adrian.

When the cook approached, checking orders, the stranger didn’t even turn his head. He whispered barely audibly, as if

speaking to himself:

— The port is just the tip. We need what is hidden in Marcos's own archive.

Adrian froze. He understood: his game had just expanded to a scale he hadn't even dared to dream of. Lisa, standing nearby, caught his gaze. Fear flashed in her eyes. She felt how the air around Adrian became thin, dangerous.

This was the beginning of the end of his quiet life. Tragedy, love, survival philosophy, and adventures in the underworld intertwined into a single knot. Adrian understood that destiny is not a blade you can stand on. It is a blade that always cuts the one who tries to hold it.

He nodded to the man in grey, barely perceptibly, and returned to the kitchen. There, amidst the smell of spices and the heat of the stoves, he understood that he had to choose a side. But in the city of shadows, even choosing a side often means death.

Part 2. The Port

Chapter 1. Unloading

The stars over the Mediterranean Sea hung low that night, like heavy silver nails pinning the black sky to the horizon. Adrian stood on the edge of the cliff, wrapped in a windbreaker, looking down where the dark water lazily licked the rocky shore. The wind brought the smell of salt, seaweed, and something else — sweetish, tart, reminiscent of the spices he usually added to rice. But now it was the smell of money. The smell of death.

Marcos didn't explain the details over the phone. He just said: "Be at the spot at two. Bring people you trust. And don't ask anything". For Adrian, this was a sign of ultimate trust or the final test before the abyss. After the story with the envelope and the man in the grey suit, he understood: there was no way back. He had become part of the mechanism.

Down below, in a cove hidden from prying eyes, people had already gathered. Shadows moved silently, like ghosts. They smoked, hiding the cigarette in their fist, and hid the butts in their pockets. No flashlights, no extra words. Only the dull noise of the surf and rare commands, whispered in a mix of Arabic and Spanish.

From the darkness of the sea, as if materializing from the very underworld, a rubber boat began to emerge. It moved without navigation lights, guided only by the stars. Adrian remembered ancient navigators, who also looked at the sky to find their way. But those sought new lands, while these carried a cargo that destroyed lives faster than any storm.

The boat nudged the pebbles with its nose. People rushed forward.

— Carefully, — Adrian said quietly, more to himself than to others. — These aren't sacks of potatoes.

They unloaded the bricks onto the shore. Each weighed twenty-five kilograms. They were wrapped in black polyethylene, tightly, like vacuum suitcases. Water ran off them without penetrating inside. Adrian took one package in his hands. It was heavy, cold, and slippery. Inside, the pressed mass of hashish hardened like stone.

The night worked like a conveyor belt. People passed the bricks from hand to hand, forming a chain to the trucks waiting on the road. The car headlights were taped with special film that allowed light to pass only downwards, so as not to attract the attention of satellites or coast guard patrols.

Adrian stepped aside, lighting a cigarette. The lighter flame illuminated his face for a moment — tired, focused. He observed the process. That night, from ten to fifteen tons of cargo were supposed to pass through the cove. A figure that made one's head spin. This wasn't just prohibited substances. It was fuel for thousands of small deals, for broken destinies in Amsterdam, Berlin, Paris. And it all started here, where he once simply sold containers of food.

— Beautiful, isn't it? — the voice beside him made him flinch.

It was one of the Moroccans, the boat captain. His face was weathered by wind and salt, his eyes shining with a feverish fire.

— What's beautiful? — Adrian asked, exhaling smoke towards the sea.

— The stars. They always indicate the way. They don't care what you're carrying. Good or evil. They just shine.

Adrian looked at the sky. A simpleton's philosophy, in which there was a terrifying truth. The universe was truly indifferent. For the cosmos, the concept of "crime" did not exist. There was only matter, movement, and gravity.

— The stars don't shine for us, — Adrian replied. — We invent the routes ourselves.

The captain smirked and went to help his people.

The trucks filled up quickly. It was a streamlined system. As soon as the last brick disappeared into the depths of the van, the tarp was tightened, and the vehicle moved off silently. The route was known: border, France, further — Holland. From there, the blood of this cargo would spill into the veins of Europe in small batches, through couriers, drops, clubs.

Adrian remained on the shore last. The boat motor faded in the distance, carrying the empty rubber back to Morocco. The waves again began to lazily roll the pebbles, erasing the tire tracks and boot prints. In an hour, no one would be able to tell what had happened here.

He felt sudden nausea. Not from the smell, which had now soaked into his clothes, but from the awareness of the scale. He thought he would become an intermediary, a man who smoothed out the edges. But now he stood on the foundation of this empire. His business instinct, his talent for organizing processes had led him here. He was an efficient cook who was now cooking poison for an entire continent.

The phone vibrated in his pocket (the sound was off). A message from an unknown number: “Cargo accepted. You handled it. Now you’re one of us. But remember: those who see too much sometimes disappear without a trace”.

Adrian clenched the phone in his hand. The threat was transparent. Marcos was consolidating success, but the man in the grey suit was also watching. Adrian was caught between the hammer and the anvil.

To return to the car, he had to walk several kilometers through mountainous, and in some places open, terrain. It was necessary to walk without a flashlight on and in complete darkness. Behind his back, small lights sparkled; these were the eyes of jackals that accompanied him and waited for the right moment to attack. And they attacked only when they felt that the “victim” they were accompanying was weak and infirm. And yes, they really make sounds as if a small child is crying!

He got into the car. The cabin smelled of his signature chicken rice, which he had forgotten to remove yesterday. This smell of domestic comfort now seemed like a mockery. He started the engine and looked in the rearview mirror. In the reflection, he saw himself — the same tall, handsome guy with a detached gaze. The girls in the clubs would still dance for him, hoping for attention. But now he knew the price of that attention.

Ahead awaited a new role. Distribution of cargo, control of flows, money that cannot be spent. But somewhere deep in the soul, under the layer of cynicism and calculation, a spark of something human glowed. Maybe it was the hope of finding a way out. Or a woman who could see the man behind the mask of the “grey cardinal”.

Adrian turned on the radio. A quiet jazz melody flowed from the speakers. He drove onto the highway, merging with the night flow of cars. Each headlight ahead was just as lonely a star in this artificial sky, each car carried its own destiny.

He didn't know yet that in a week, in one of Marcos's clubs, he would meet a girl who wouldn't dance on a pole and wouldn't ask for food. She would look at him as if she saw those documents in the envelope and those bricks on the shore. And that look would become more dangerous to him than any police.

But for now, there was only night, road, and a heavy load on his back, which was becoming part of his soul. The blade of destiny was becoming sharper, and Adrian understood: to not get cut, you need to learn how to hold it correctly. Or learn to walk on blood without leaving traces.

Part 3. Acquaintance

The morning after the night on the shore came too quickly. Adrian didn't wake up to an alarm, but to the feeling that his skin had become alien. He stood under the shower for almost half an hour, scrubbing his hands, elbows, neck with a washcloth, but the smell wouldn't go away. It wasn't just the smell of the sea — it was the smell of someone else's life that he had accepted into himself along with the cargo. Water ran down his body, washing away dust and salt, but not the feeling of heaviness in his chest.

He looked in the mirror. The same tall guy with dark circles under his eyes. The same gaze that girls called “mysterious”, and which he himself considered simply empty. Now something else appeared in that emptiness. A shadow.

The phone lay in the kitchen. One missed call from Marcos and three messages from an unknown number. Adrian ignored them. First, coffee with fried bread rubbed with tomato and tuna, drizzled with olive oil. The ritual of preparing the drink was a way for him to regain control. Grain, grind, water temperature. Then freshly squeezed orange juice. A cigarette. View of the sea. Here the rules were clear, unlike the world outside the window.

By evening, he arrived at “L'Ombra”. The club was still

sleeping, only the duty lamps were burning. The guards at the entrance nodded to him with a new shade of respect. Yesterday he was just the “right-hand man”, today he had become an accomplice. In this world, blood bound tighter than any contracts.

In his office — a former storage room that Marcos ordered to be turned into an office — Adrian dealt with logistics. The cargo was on the ground, now it needed to be dissolved in Europe. Trucks with vegetables, containers with equipment, private yachts. Marcos wanted to send a batch to Rotterdam in two days. Adrian was sitting over maps and route diagrams when the door opened without a knock.

She stood in the doorway.

Adrian had seen her in the club before. She played the piano in the lounge area when the main party started. She was about thirty, maybe less. Dark hair gathered in a careless bun, a dress the color of the night sky. She never smiled at visitors and never accepted drinks.

— You shouldn’t be here, — Adrian said, not looking up from the papers. His voice was even, without irritation. This was his defense.

— I was told that you now settle matters, — she replied. Her voice was low, with a barely noticeable accent. Possibly Eastern European, or perhaps just a peculiarity of diction. — I want to settle one matter.

Adrian finally looked up. Her eyes were light, almost transparent, and there was no fear in them that he was used to seeing in the club staff.

— I'm not security. I handle organization.

— Organization of chaos, — she corrected, entering the room and closing the door. — My name is Leyla.

— Adrian

— I know. The one who cooks food and manages the stars.

Adrian froze. How could she know about the shore? About the stars? He slowly put down the pen.

— Who sent you?

— No one. I observe. Pianists see more than guards. Guards look at doors, and musicians listen to the silence between the notes. I heard how the rhythm in the city changed over the last twenty-four hours. As if the heartbeat accelerated.

She approached the table and touched the route map with her fingers.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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