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in the time loop

Secrets of past lives 2



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«Издательские решения»

Golitsyna T.

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«Издательские решения»,

The eternal theme of reincarnation, repeated incarnations of different people, the Secret Mysteries in the Egyptian pyramids, the Elixir of Life, the Templars. The events happening to me in my memory were with me, and I was the actor there. I have penetrated into the most distant epochs to unravel the mysteries of the past. I've seen crusades and ancient civilizations, castle adventures and magical creatures. And all these events are interconnected and repeated in different incarnations.

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Chapter 1

Evening Cairo was bustling with a colorful crowd of residents and travelers. The noise of a crowded procession was coming towards us. It was a strange sight. Children carried torches, men with half-naked torsos, brandishing sabers, uttered strange guttural screams, walked to the beat of the melody of fanfare, and drumming. They were followed by singers and dancers dressed in silk striped dresses, accompanied by dulcimers and castanets. The girls' faces were painted in the manner of ancient Egyptian queens, and their hands were decorated with bird feathers. Someone in our crowd of spectators said that today is the feast of Isis. "So that's why women's hands are decorated with feathers. The priestesses of Isis?" I thought.

Suddenly, a ray of sunlight from the setting sun hit my eyes, and I involuntarily closed my eyelids. And when he opened them, he noticed a girl... beautiful... just of extraordinary beauty. She looked at me intently, then shyly covered her face with a veil so that only her eyes remained, like moist black olives, slightly covered with long fluffy eyelashes.

I no longer noticed any wrestlers or dancers, everything around me seemed to have disappeared into a light haze, and the sounds of drums and fanfare could be heard from somewhere far away. A ray of sunlight splashed into my eyes again, I lowered my eyelids again, and when I opened them, the girl was no longer in the place where she was standing. A young Arab was standing there, studying me intently.

"Damn it!" I muttered, "Where did she go?"

"Who?" Who are you looking for?" Elsa whispered, admiring the half — naked men. Their powerful torsos, thickly smeared with palm oil, made a strong impression.

Suddenly, there was a gap in the crowd, and I saw that beautiful woman again. Our eyes met. The girl turned and walked away. I hurried after him. The girl moved with a calm gait, and the men seemed to make way for her. And behind her, the crowd was closing in again. I had to push through this crowd in an attempt to get closer to this beauty. The girl led me further and further away, at one point she looked back, as if checking if I was following her, if I hadn't lost track of her, and ducked into a narrow, dirty alley. This alley seemed deserted, and only an old woman who looked like a gypsy was sitting at the door of a small hut. The beauty had disappeared somewhere. I plunged into the tangle of dirty, winding streets, already making my way through a crowd in rags and packs of dogs, came to a dead end a couple of times, and returned again. Stopping, I began to wonder where I had gotten to in the first place, and what kind of crowds of ragamuffins were swarming on this street. It was getting dark abruptly. In Egypt, night falls almost immediately, so I had to find my way to a lighted street almost by touch. Here I was greeted by worried Elsa and Sergey.

"Well, where did you go, crazy, walking through these labyrinths?"

"I was chasing a dream... a ghostly obsession," I said wearily.

"Is that girl a gypsy?" Sergey asked.

"You noticed, didn't you? She's not a gypsy," I replied, offended.

"So there she is, standing on the other side of the street, looking at us."

I was stunned, and suddenly, as if mesmerized, I rushed in her direction. But the same young Arab blocked my way again. He was shouting something in a guttural voice, waving his arms in front of me. He suddenly stopped talking, thrust an object into my hand, and was gone. The girl also disappeared. Already at the hotel we examined this strange object. Klaus came in. We met at Elsa's wedding. The admiral assigned this strange-looking man to accompany us to Egypt. At least, that's what we thought the admiral ordered. It was later that we found out that everything was the other way around, that Klaus chose us and paid for the trip, that he was our guardian and reliable protection from all the twists and turns and troubles. But we didn't know that yet.

This Klaus is weird. Tall, thin, with attentive, piercing dark eyes. He always wears a light black velvet cloak and a black velvet hat. His appearance in public caused a strange commotion among the people. On the streets of Cairo, the crowd of Arabs fell silent at once and parted in fear before him. He walked proudly, not paying attention to anyone. It was difficult for me to understand this man, as if a light haze of incredible mystery was hiding him. What are you looking at so intently?

"Yes, some Arab gave Maxim this amulet, the Eye of Horus," Sergei handed the amulet to Klaus.

"It's not the Eye of Horus, it's the Eye of Ra. Look, there is no tear flowing from the eye, in the form of a curl. The eye rests on the rook, and a winged disk crowns it. It's Ra sailing down the Nile in his golden boat."

"And what does this amulet mean?"

"It seems to me that this thing opens one door in the labyrinths of the pyramids. This is the key. And they gave it to you for a reason. You'll find yourself in front of that door again. And now we will go with you, or rather, sail to the feast in honor of Isis."

Our boat docked at a small island on the Nile late in the evening. The full moon rose slowly and majestically, illuminating with its silver light a large hall with columns, into which steps led directly from the water. Countless yachts and boats moored at the steps for their passengers to take part in the celebration in honor of the Goddess of the Moon. Numerous lamps flickered with lights to the sound of flutes.

We went into the central hall, where a group of girls were dancing around the shrine. In long, elegant white dresses, tied with a dark blue belt under their breasts, they slowly and gracefully walked around the altar in the center of the hall. Stomping, the girls shook their silver chains to the beat of the castanets, and small bells rang on the straps of their sandals. One girl among the dancers caught my attention. Something familiar flickered in her appearance. Modestly lowering her head, she gently and airily glided in a circle. Suddenly, the sound of drums rang out, the massive gates swung open, and a flood of light from the fully risen moon poured into the hall.

The moon shone on the girl's face, she shuddered and looked up at me. I recognized her immediately, the stranger that I had been chasing unaccountably through the crowd on the streets of Cairo. Blushing, the beauty shyly lowered her gaze.

Those eyes, that look, immediately penetrated my soul, and filled my whole being. Suddenly, the dancers rushed to the exit with the speed of a bird and disappeared behind the columns. I stood on tiptoe to see where they had flown off to, and it was as if a dream was disappearing from my heart again. Having barely made our way through the crowd, my friends and I rushed to our yacht to set sail faster before the crowd of boats and boats began.

The image of the young priestess haunted me, her bright gaze, full of tenderness, stood in front of me all the time, her smile did not leave my head. Engrossed in these thoughts, I did not even notice how the pyramids appeared in front of us, and on top of one of them the full moon seemed to be sitting. In this moonlight, I noticed a female figure fluttering out of the shadows and disappearing into the pyramid wall. At that time, Klaus invited us to go ashore. Interestingly, he headed in the same direction to the pyramid, and we obediently followed him.

“My friends, now we will enter the secret passage of the pyramid, where not everyone is allowed. But they’ll let us through. Please do not be afraid, your path will be safe, but not easy. Get ready for the challenges of the trial, at the end of which the Great Priests who possess the secret of the Emerald Tablet are waiting for you.”

“How pathetic,” said Sergey, “the mystery of the Emerald Tablet has not yet been solved, and it is still unknown whether it really exists.”

“That’s what you’re going to find out. Not everyone passes the tests completely, Orpheus tried twice and failed, for which he paid with his beautiful Eurydice. I have to warn you. First, you will complete four physical endurance tests...”

“What’s Orpheus doing here?” Elsa interrupted him.

“And this way,” I intervened in the conversation, “the one who passes all the tests remains among the Great Teachers, the one who does not pass the last, most difficult test, is released into the human world. Having great secret knowledge gained in the pyramids from the Great Priests, he has the right to bring them to people. So Moses and Christ did not pass this last test, they were released into the world and created great religions. I strongly suspect that Moses brazenly stole the notorious Ark from the priests. And Pharaoh pursued him with his army not because he wanted to return the Jews to Egypt, he wanted to return the stolen relic of his country, the Ark.”

“What kind of difficult test is this?”

“That’s where you’ll find out.”

I knew that once, about fifteen years ago, I came across a book by a traveler in the East. He described in detail these initiations in the pyramids.

“I don’t feel like staying with the Great Priests to leave this world forever, retire from worldly life, and enjoy great wisdom in solitude,” Sergei said thoughtfully.

Klaus smiled, “And you, and in particular you, Maxim, are unlikely to complete them completely. But you should try. Orpheus tried, but it didn’t work out, but they gave him the right to organize a school. I hope you’ve heard about the famous orphics, Orphic school?”

“And why did he pay Eurydice?” Lida asked.

“Because,” I said, “the priests weren’t stupid either. Eurydice was reputed to be a beauty, and the priests bet on her. They need the priestesses of Isis. So, when Orpheus fell down the stairs on one test, he demanded permission from the priests to repeat it. And those who were cunningly made were allowed, but they set the condition that you would not go through again, Eurydice would stay with us forever. Orpheus fell down the stairs again, and Eurydice remained in the temple of Isis. Then Orpheus, creating his own school, came up with a fairy tale about the death of his beloved to hide his shame, as he traded a beautiful wife.”

“Oh! it turns out you know a lot,” Klaus laughed, “all the better, you’ll be instructing your friends along the way. You won’t be lost with Max, he turned to my friends.”

“So you’re not coming with us, then,” there was a sarcastic note in my voice.

“No, but I will be waiting for you at a certain place. I hope you get out of there safely.”

“Thank you, you calmed me down,” sarcasm sounded in Sergey’s voice too.

Chapter 2

We went through the portal and descended into the pyramid. At the bottom of the stairs, we found ourselves in an aisle. I immediately said that I would go first, the girls would follow me, and Sergey would bring up the rear.

“Guys, don’t panic, don’t be scared as much as possible, obey my commands.”

Yes, I read about these mazes in a book once, so I have some idea of what awaits us. The main thing is that everyone’s shoes are comfortable, their clothes are soft, and they don’t restrict their movements. In general, everyone is dressed in uniform. Girls, gather your hair as completely as possible, and pull your caps tighter over your heads. Well, exhaled and go ahead. We step carefully and carefully.

Let's go... I overreacted. We literally made our way in the dark along the twists and turns of the narrowing corridor, and now we were crawling on all fours, and there was no end in sight. Elsa was sneezing from the dust, and everyone's eyes were watering. We were about to despair at the futility of the venture when the corridor suddenly widened, allowing us to stand taller.

The corridor led us into a spacious gallery, at the end of which there was a glimmer of light. The dim light of the oil lamp barely illuminated the picturesque scenes of the life of distant gods. Surprisingly, the colors on the walls were bright, as if they had been painted recently. Sergei, without any hesitation, borrowed this single oil lamp.

We moved cautiously in the semi-darkness. The heat was becoming unbearable, as if we were descending to the center of the earth. Sweat covered our eyes. I tried to tread very carefully, carefully feeling the way with my feet. There may be a well somewhere here, and I'll just fall into it, dragging my friends with me. My expectations were not in vain, my foot, after solid ground, hung in the air.

"Attention, there is a well in front of us."

"And then what? Is this a trap?" Sergey, from behind the girls, held out his hand with a lamp.

"The bottom is not visible, but there is a ledge along the wall, so I understand that we need to carefully walk around this hole, pressing ourselves against the wall."

"And if one of us falls?" Lida whispered.

"Stop your knees from shaking, you won't fall off."

"As always, you are gallant, Maxim, no, to support you, morally."

"Let's hope that we will find a passage in the wall."

I pressed myself against the wall, and shuffling my feet, I moved to the right, followed by the guys, breathing heavily. It's a good thing it's dark, at least none of us can see that gaping hole in front of us, black and unfathomable.

"Is it just me, or are we going down in a spiral?" Elsa whispered in a strangled voice.

"It doesn't seem like we're definitely going down. Don't mumble, it's distracting. I don't want to jump down, or we might not even get the bones together."

We can't get away, we went down into the pit. Sergei held up the lamp, which was already barely flickering, and we managed to see the iron lattice gates. We tried to open them, but it doesn't work. Then I decided to lift the grille. Oh, a miracle, the gate lifted easily. As soon as we passed through the gates, they descended with a terrible roar, and the echo of this thunder reverberated through the catacombs. Everyone shuddered and froze.

Again, a staircase with steep stone steps leading down appeared in front of us, we carefully descended it and entered a torchlit gallery.

"Oh, let there be light", Elsa exclaimed, examining the painted columns, torches blazing at the top of each, "someone is keeping the fire going here."

"Now you'll have enough fire," I said gloomily.

"From where? Look over there, the alley, the garden, and the starry sky. Yes, we came out of the catacombs, into the air! Hurray!" Elsa exclaimed happily.

"Great! The lamp is already going out, the wick is over," Sergei enthusiastically echoed her.

I remained silent in concentration, and Lida, knowing this trait of mine well, looked warily into the depths of the garden. And I was right, snakes and spiders were crawling out from all sides, from all corners. Huge spiders. They were moving their tentacles threateningly, moving rapidly in our direction. Aggressively opening their hoods and opening their vile mouths, snakes writhed, falling on us from the ceiling. Fear permeated us, rapidly seizing our souls. I saw the horror and despair on the faces of my friends. The girls screamed, Sergei grabbed a torch from the wall and, waving it, tried to drive away the creatures. And their number was increasing, they were climbing from all the cracks, falling from somewhere above, the creatures were already curling at our feet. I was stunned, I was not aware of such an ordeal.

“Maxim,” Lida whispered in a slightly strangled voice. A huge snake completely wrapped around her body. The rings slowly shrank, shimmering with black oil streaks. The hideous snout of a viper protruded from behind the interlacing rings, its eyes glittering maliciously. When I pulled the torch off the wall, the snake quickly loosened its rings, in which it held Lida, and furiously jumped at me. But the blow I delivered to the reptile’s head was unmistakable. The reptile convulsed, and suddenly seemed to melt to the ground.

“Hey!” it suddenly dawned on me, “This is an illusion! There are none! Take away your fear, take away your fear! There are none!”

“Ouch!” Elsa exclaimed. The snake jumped on her and opened its mouth right in front of Elsa’s face. With the hypnotic gaze of its green eyes, the creature mockingly rested on Elsa’s eyes, almost touching her lips with its forked tongue.

Unbelievable! Elsa suddenly, also looking into the snake’s eyes, calmly took it by the throat and threw it to the ground. And... the snake disappeared, disappeared into thin air! I was right, it’s an illusion. We were being tested for fear. Our own fears came to us in the form of these reptiles.

“Ugh!” Sergei spat, “Ugh on you,” he added more calmly.

Our fear and panic slowly receded, and with them the bastards disappeared. After a few minutes, they were no longer around us. Everyone slowly took a deep breath.

“How did you know?”

“I saw how the snake seemed to melt on the ground. Although, maybe they were specially collected here? But the deaths of travelers are not included in the plans of the local priests, on the contrary, for them it is an extreme event if such a thing happens.”

“But it does happen,” Sergei retorted gloomily, “it’s a pretty prospect to die of your own fear.”

“This often happens even in life, people often die not from cancer, but from fear of realizing such a disease. And fear begins to devour a person faster than the tumor grows.”

We lingered a bit longer, looking around cautiously. Finally, the peaceful view of the garden finally calmed us down. And Elsa, almost dancing, rushed forward.

“Elsa, take your time,” I tugged on her arm, “we agreed, I’m in front, you’re in the middle.”

“Do you think there’s more?”

“I don’t think so, I know”

And resolutely pushing the girl aside, I stepped forward. I could already see the glow of a flame in the distance. As we got closer, the flames leaped higher above the trees. It shot up at once, both high and wide in all directions.

Everything was burning in front of us. Reeds, pines, palm trees, and flames like fiery snakes quickly spread from branch to branch, engulfing tree after tree, and sparks flew in all directions. The flames were already raging, buzzing, and new flashes were accompanied by the sounds of an explosion.

“We must not delay! We’re going there, straight ahead!?” I shouted over the terrible din.”

“But there’s a fire, look, sparks and burning branches have already covered the whole path!”

“And there’s nowhere else! There is no turning back! Hold on, friends! Don’t panic, go ahead!”

And we rushed forward. Instantly, as if the fire was just waiting for this, trees caught fire from all sides with even bigger flashes, branches cracked, and showers of sparks showered us. The trees seemed to come closer to us, connecting their burning crowns above our heads from all sides, throwing burning brands at us, spitting fiery sparks. The girls grabbed their hair and violently pushed it under their caps, screamed, getting burned. Sergei and I bravely endured.

Suddenly, a passage opened up in front of us, and as soon as we stepped inside, the grate slammed down behind us again. Barely catching their breath, everyone watched in horror as the entire forest was already ablaze with wild fire.

“Yes, it’s a test!” Sergey itched, “we could have burned down there, to a pile of ashes.”

“I have burns on my hands,” Lida whimpered.

“Don’t be afraid, we couldn’t burn out,” Elsa chastised Sergei, “fear drives us forward. Healthy fear, not panic.”

“We wouldn’t have burned out. Do you think they plant a whole forest all the time? It seems to me that these are metal structures, complete imitation of trees. They are coated with combustible mixtures, such as sparklers.”

“Wow! sparklers, well, too big, whole torches flew off.”

— So, get ready for the next one. We have passed through earth, air and fire. There’s still water left. Listen and memorize. When the stairs come down, no way, do you hear, no way! Don’t grab the stairs. They will break off, and you will fall back into the water. Grab onto the vertical sticks and hold on at least with your teeth. And when the ring appears, grab it and wrap your elbows around the hoop. Do you understand? Not with your fingers, not with your hands, but throw your elbow over the hoop. Did you remember? And most importantly, don’t panic. Well, exhaled and go ahead. Lida, Lida, what is it, what kind of tears? Pull yourself together, everything will work out.”

“I’m not a good swimmer,” Lida sobbed. “I’ll be there for you,” he tried to cheer her up, but he thought to himself: “poor girl, she’s going to suffer horrors, I shouldn’t have dragged her with me.”

And holding our breath, we hurried forward. The path made us turn off, and led us down into a dark space. Streams of cold air blew over us gently at first, then the air became colder. We could hear strange voices, either the screams of people or their screams. We entered a huge cave, and a roaring torrent roared in front of us, rushing past us, furious bursts of laughter and human screams mixed with the rumble of dark, almost black, water.

Chapter 3

It was scary, but my courage took over. There was nowhere to go, we jumped into these black terrible waves. As if sensing this, the stream suddenly roared even louder, and the waves swirled around us in a whirlpool.

“Where is the current taking us?” Sergei shouted.

“Ouch! Something huge and slimy is rubbing against me,” Elsa screamed.

“I’m going to drown!” Max! Yes, a hand! Give me your hand!” Lida screamed at the top of her lungs.

Time seemed to have disappeared for us, we unsuccessfully struggled with the current that was rapidly carrying us into the unknown. But strangely, we didn’t get pulled apart. We were all wallowing next to each other. Lida looked at me with wild eyes. I could see the horror in her eyes. Her strength was already running out. Suddenly, from above, in the bright light, a shiny staircase began to descend towards us.

“There she is!” I shouted, trying to drown out the roar of the water with this cry, “don’t grab the steps!”

Of course, Lida immediately grabbed the step, and immediately collapsed into the water. I grabbed her armpits and hoisted her up. Finally, she began to think. Clinging to the vertical support, Lida pressed her cheek against it and hung limply in exhaustion, not giving me a single centimeter to save myself.

Elsa easily, for her weight, flew up onto another vertical crossbar, and even managed to help Sergei by dragging him by the scruff of his neck. That’s what true love does. The ladder was already going up, swinging violently from side to side. There was no way I could catch and grab even the small tip of the vertical crossbar. The ladder, rising, slipped out of my hands, and the whirlpool, swirling, pushed me away from the moment of salvation.

“Max!” Elsa shouted.

I had no choice but to grab Lida’s leg with one hand and the crossbar with the other. Lida almost lost her temper and started kicking in a frenzy. But I had already pulled myself up and was holding onto the handrail tightly. And then the ladder suddenly began to sink back into the water.

“What’s that?” Are there many of us? Can’t the stairs go up?”

At that moment, lightning flashed, and a huge copper ring appeared in the cloud.

“The ring! Grab it and hang on to it, like I said!” I grabbed the ring and pulled it towards us. Elsa and Sergey also pulled him up and hung on to him, throwing their arms over the hoop.

“Lida, come on, get off the ladder! Look, the ring is coming off!”

The girl, hugging the handrail of the stairs, seemed to be in unconsciousness. I let go of the ring, grabbed the handrail, swung and punched her in the ass. Sergey held out his hand to me to help me not to miss the ring. I wrapped my legs around Lida and the handrail, and with Sergey’s help, I pulled the ring towards me. Lida seemed rooted to the stairs.

“I’m going to leave you here!” I growled, “I’m counting to two!” One time!” and pinched her painfully.

—
“Aah!” Lida screamed heart — rendingly, and jumped like a monkey to the hoop.

“You fool!” Elsa snapped at her angrily. But we were all safely hanging on the hoop.

Our suffering did not end there. The ring, swinging, increased its amplitude, suddenly, as if a storm had hit us, and the vortex swirled, spun so that we could no longer see anything. We were spinning like astronauts in a centrifuge.

“I’m going to be sick!” Lida screamed again.

“Everyone’s going to be sick!” “Which one of us answered?” Could someone’s mouth really speak? Everyone was on the verge of fainting.

The storm abruptly subsided as it had appeared, our circling in the air gradually stopped, and the ring gradually descended. Suddenly, it swung violently, the hoop separated, and we collapsed onto the grass at once.

Lida crawled back to the bush, she was violently vomiting. Everyone was lying helplessly on the ground. Then I was seized with a vague, unaccountable uneasiness. I began to fumble in my pockets, and pulled out two lifeless corpses of my fetches. My poor assistants, they had been saving me all this time, and exhausted from the energy they had spent almost completely, they were dying in front of my eyes. Fifa was sprawled out on the grass like a black spot, but he was breathing. But Fofa was lying there, barely opening his mouth and rolling his eyes.

“Are they dead?” Elsa crawled up to me.

I couldn’t speak, there was a lump in my throat. If it hadn’t been for them, I wouldn’t have been able to stay there on the stairs and reach for the ring with Lida. “Look, there’s a waterfall. Let’s bring them to the water and sprinkle water on them.” Together with Elsa, we carried these little creatures to the water.

“Look, what a big and beautiful garden, fountains all around, and the music... do you hear the music, Max? I hope our trials are over, and we somehow got out of the labyrinths to the surface?”

“Our trials are still ahead. We went through the physically difficult ones. And now, guys, get ready for the fact that the priests will “brainwash” you with their tricks and tricks. Don’t lose your healthy skepticism.” “Why would they do that?” What is the goal?” Sergey asked.

“Every sect tries to attract more adherents. There is a great struggle going on on earth for human souls in all religions. What does this give them? Somewhere up there, there also seems to be a struggle going on. They have their own party there too. ‘What’s below is like what’s above,’ and mind you, I didn’t say that. So, our world is created in the image and likeness. And there are also undercover intrigues, the desire to seize power, become close to their ‘emperor’, and remove competitors. So, Archangel Michael has removed his competitor, Lucifer. He complained to the Almighty, and the Father disowned his first-born son. Everything is like people, everything is like gods.”

“So he complained that the ‘sons of God’ had an affair with women.”

“No, Mikhail, as the last informer, did not start with this, he made the main claim — they gave people knowledge that should belong only to them, the angels, and completed the denunciation about the allegedly depraved actions of angels who had intercourse with earthly women and had a bunch

of children. These children were very different from ordinary people in their knowledge, and leaders appeared among them, uniting the tribes under their leadership. This is how clans arose, and their descendants also possessed incredible abilities for ordinary people. Even their blood composition was different. There was more copper than iron in it. Hence the expression 'blue blood'. Subsequently, all descendants tried to preserve this feature. And marriages were only made with their own kind. This is how famous dynasties arose."

"They did not save this blood, they degenerated, mixing with red blood. But the remnants still remain," Sergei continued.

"What is this, they think up there that we were supposed to walk around in skins like a silent, illiterate herd, and pray to them incessantly?" Elsa was indignant.

"Having gained knowledge, people began to think and analyze, which means they got out of control. It's not for nothing that for a long time the contents of the Bible in the services were read only in Latin. Without understanding, people believed the priests' interpretations. But we digress, my assistants are already recovering, they will still serve us."

"Welcome to the Mysteries, our new initiates," suddenly came a voice from behind us. "You have won a victory over the body, now you need to strengthen your spirit."

We turned around at once, and a tall, elderly man in a robe was standing in front of us, holding a palm branch in his hand. The man examined us carefully, while politely adding, "Follow me."

Everyone obeyed in silence, and the priest led us down a narrow path. The light was slowly fading, and there was a small pavilion on the bank of a bubbling stream. The priest pointed us to the sofas and invited us to rest. Either the atmosphere was drowsy in the room, or we were really tired, but we all fell on the sofas at once and fell asleep

When I woke up, I saw our guide next to me, but my friends were not there. No one. And I was completely naked and covered with a sheet. I stared at the priest, and just wanted to open my mouth to ask a question, when he put his finger to his lips, signaling me to be silent..

"Now you are all going through the next test, silence and loneliness. Each of you is placed in your own pavilion, where you will spend time in complete silence and darkness, reflecting and remembering about your earthly life."

Then a young man came up to me with a bowl filled with water, sang a verse in his own language and handed the bowl to me. I understood, I need to drink from this cup. But you have to be on your guard, you never know what they've mixed up there. I obediently took the bowl with both hands and pretended that I was enjoying slurping this water. Satisfied, the attendants pulled a robe over me and placed a wreath on my head. Oh, gods, what I looked like. But I was more worried about where my assistants, fetch, the funny little animals, had gone. I hope they managed to hide somewhere nearby.

The hierophant offered me something to eat, which the gods had sent, and left. The gods sent a very generous treat — wine, fruit, partridge meat, and maybe a deer, or whatever they have here. After paying tribute to these delicacies, I stretched out on the couch again and began to think. The first one, where everything is mine, well, Sergei, let's say, will not lose his brains, but the girls. The oil lamps went out all at once, and I found myself in total darkness. An interesting case. I got up and started groping my way out of here. Uselessly. A completely enclosed space. It was as if there were no doors. Hmm, but I have to manage my physiological needs somehow. Yeah, there's something like a toilet seat. Okay.

I lay down on the couch and continued to think. The silence is dead, not a sound, not a rustle, it's already ringing in my ears. All sorts of bad thoughts came into my head, pictures of my life floated, past deeds, beautiful and ugly, women, offended and unoffended. Sleep closed my eyelids, and I don't know how long I slept. I woke up with the feeling that someone was in the room. It's still completely dark.

"Hey, is anyone there?" I jumped up and bumped into a tray of food. Dishes clattered as they fell to the floor. Damn, I think I knocked over the food. Well, at least they don't forget about me. I

wonder how long I've been here alone. I lost track of time and days.. I remember they can keep it in such a casemate for up to 40 days. You can go crazy. Some of the food is still on the tray, you can eat a little. But the food turned out to be very modest — only bread, a mug of water tipped over. He tried to find a way out again. Uselessly. The walls are very tightly fitted, you won't find an exit, and even in the dark. I've been warming up a bit, I've tried to read poetry, nothing comes to mind. The emptiness, and the ringing silence. I fell over on the bed.

The silence seemed to deafen me. As if falling into oblivion, I saw the face of my beautiful stranger bending over me. Her lips were beautifully shaped, and a lotus flower waved above her dark, smooth forehead. I looked into her eyes. They were huge black eyes, shiny and at the same time moist like a deer's, framed by black curved eyelashes, like two stars shining through the soft evening mist. You couldn't take your eyes off those eyes. I was gripped by a vague memory hidden in the corners of my soul, because this face was familiar to me. But where could I have seen him? In what distant times did we meet? What kind of previous life could we have encountered? But it seemed natural to me that this woman was the epitome of my ideal.

The vision was replaced by another picture. Was I dreaming, or was it real? I wandered around in a huge room with colonnades, looking at colorful sacred images and inscriptions on the walls telling about the fantastic gifts to Amun from the pharaohs. And there was a beautiful girl standing there. Slender, lithe, her painted eyes shone with an incredible brilliance like diamonds. She was beautiful, and I was hoping that she would ask me to be a guide in this temple. The girl looked at me smiling, and my heart melted, and everything stopped in my chest. She reached out her hand, studded with rings and bracelets, and touched me lightly, "Omari, do you really think you're suffering alone?"

"No, I know you love me, Tianta."

"Oh, if you only knew how much I hate this Radames. But my brother really wants to become related to the tsarevich's family. This will significantly improve his business. But you said you had a plan. How happy I will be when this suspense is over, and we won't have to pretend and hide our love."

"I'll be waiting for you here tomorrow, at the same place, as soon as the moon rises." There will be a celebration in the house, you will see me, and I will give you a sign." And passionately attracted his beloved to himself. The words of love that I whispered to her silenced the girl's fear.

I straightened up and looked into her eyes, and her gaze was so strange, clear and searching that my face flushed and fire ran through my body. And when she left, I was gripped by a deadly emptiness, as if I had plunged into a dark abyss. The day set for Radames' marriage to Tianta has arrived. But not only the groom, but Tianta and I were looking forward to this day. Someone else, someone's evil will decided to interfere with our plans. Like a shadow, I slipped easily and nimbly into the gallery, where my beloved was supposed to be waiting for me.

"Tianta, Tianta," I whispered anxiously.

When I got no answer, I sat down on the pedestal of the column and leaned my head against the cold marble.

"Immortal gods! Where is she?" My excitement and despair have reached their peak.

Suddenly, there was a commotion and shouting outside. Tianta's maid was shouting. I rushed to her and stopped in horror. A frightened girl informed me that Tianta had been stung by a snake hiding in a basket of flowers. My heart almost broke when I reached the house of my friend and brother Tianta Ahom. Terrified servants were rushing around the house in deep sorrow, whispering anxiously among themselves. When they saw me, they rushed to me and took me to the upper rooms. A sick woman was lying there, and the shadow of death was already lying on her beautiful face. Her brother Ahom was kneeling beside her, holding her hands. Tianta's maidservants wept bitterly, and the old nurse wept. I staggered closer, and unable to say anything, I just whispered, "Who?" Who!

I was told that an unknown man wrapped in a cloak brought a luxurious basket of expensive lilies as a wedding day gift, in which a snake was hiding, the bite of which was fatal. I looked at this deadly bouquet of lilies with hatred, and the smell that they exuded seemed familiar to me. For a

moment, the smell reminded me of the night I spent with Tianta. My Tianta was lying on the bed. She was still alive, and her marble chest was disfigured by a crimson wound with blackened edges. I stopped, falling to my knees next to Ahom. She looked up at me. I saw no pain in her eyes, but only sadness and tears. She held out her hand to me. My breath caught in my throat.

“Who!?” I whispered, “Who!?”

“Some kind of shadow, a man wrapped in a cloak from head to toe,” the girl whispered. Her wonderful features shone with beauty, but the blush was already slowly fading from her cheeks, her bare arms stretched out along her body, and her head gracefully bent over her shoulder. Her eyes were lowered, and only her long eyelashes were still fluttering. Oh, how I longed for her eyes to open and her gaze to meet mine!

But her eyelids were still down, and not a single feature of her face moved, even though I was calling out to her with all my might. I was growling like a wounded animal! I called out to the heavens, to our immortal gods, but in response there was an invisible infinity and an eternal cold night.

Chapter 4

I woke up because I felt someone standing next to me. The hierophant motioned for me to follow him. I got up with difficulty, silently, slowly recovering from the emotions I had experienced in my vision. What was that? I have never gone so far, so deep into the centuries. What kind of tragedy did I experience once, thousands of years ago? And this girl, how she looks like that stranger that I met on the streets of Cairo.

“How long did you keep me in this cell?”

“Nine days,” that’s all. They usually stay here for up to 40 days in order to be completely spiritually cleansed for the next trials.”

“Nine days, and thanks for that.” I had a strange dream-vision today. And in forty days, I can imagine what unimaginable visions I would have seen.”

“Your dream, Maxim, is a picture of the past, the past that has formed an abyss between your heart and the hearts of two women.”

“Two women? So far, I’ve only seen one.”

“No, you saw two women.”

“You don’t know what I saw.” Maybe you created this phantasmagoria with your magic tricks

“It is strange to hear this from a person who is allowed to Chronicle the fate of many people. After all, you are allowed to access the information of the Great Book of Destinies.”

I shrugged my shoulders incredulously and followed him. My mentor and I passed by a dark lake, and the whole atmosphere was filled with a kind of sadness.

“Now you will spend some time here, for a state of meditation you need peace. Think about the frailty of the world you left. Here you have to purify your spirit in order to take the final test later. I’ll leave you here.”

“Yeah, I left that world,” I thought.” Well, let’s see what else they’ve got for me. Purify the spirit. And those nine days didn’t clear it, so. Damn it, where are mine, how do I find them, that’s the problem. The situation can be quite dangerous, and I need to find friends and get out of here. The adventure is taking too long. That’s Klaus, the sly one. He dragged us here for some purpose of his own. What does he want here, I wonder?”

Looking around, I realized that I was in a small valley surrounded by high cliffs. I tried to explore these rocky walls in search of a way out, but only my booming footsteps were heard in response.

I noticed in the semi-darkness that not far away, in a niche, there was a giant statue, possibly of Osiris. Could there be a door behind it? The whole energy of this place is filled with gloom and gloom, as if death, the mistress, rules here.

Suddenly, a flash of blinding light illuminated the valley, and a huge glowing ball appeared from the opposite side. There was a group of people inside it, with sad faces, moving in a ball, and rolling it with their steps. Feathered wings could be seen behind each of them.

“Ha!,” the thought flashed through my mind, “who, what kind of fool is this trick designed for? What do they mean by that?”

The people in the balloon joined their hands, then separated them in their silent dance, the wings swayed slightly, taking on a dazzling white color, then shimmering with the colors of the rainbow, darkening.

Gradually, the sphere began to recede into the depths of the dark rocks, slowly turning into a dot, until it disappeared completely, repeating the bright flash again. Maybe thousands of years ago, such tricks made a strong impression on initiates, but not on us, people corrupted by modern civilization. Clearly, they have all sorts of mechanisms here for an unprecedented attraction of wonders.

It was completely dark again, and only the faint light coming from the statue helped me navigate the gorge a little. I went to a huge boulder, and climbing it, stretched out on it at full height. It's not a bad bed, even comfortable.

At that moment, a faint light illuminated the statue in the niche. Rather, she was glowing slightly from the inside. Her cold shimmer was accompanied by light music. I woke up from my trance. A human figure was prostrated at the feet of the deity. Slowly, to the beat of the music, the figure rose, and I saw that it was female. She turned to me, and her veil lightened on her face and became transparent.

Holding my breath, I stared at those features with trepidation, and finally exclaimed, “It's you!” You, my obsession! My dream!” I threw myself at her feet as if I were my dream come true, muttering the passionate words that come to mind in moments of love ecstasy. My soul was overflowing with love from the distant past, and I felt and knew that this love had been preserving itself for all eternity.

As I spoke, her huge eyes shone and became radiant, and she held out her hands to me. And I felt like I was on fire. The girl looked at me attentively through the slits of the bedspread for a few more seconds, and, as if melting into thin air, began to disappear behind the statue.

“Stay! Don't go away, I beg you!” I shouted in a strange frenzy, “At least tell me your name!”

But the girl seemed to melt into thin air, disappearing behind the statue. I rushed over there, started looking for that damn secret passage. My heart ached from the shock, from the love and longing that I had experienced a few minutes ago. But it was all in vain, there was no door. In desperation, I sat down on a huge boulder, and tears streamed down my cheeks in hot streams. Then my guide appeared and silently took me to the pavilion, where, tired of such an ordeal, I lost track of time and fell asleep again.

In the morning, the venerable elder visited me again and began babbling to me about the elixir of eternal life.

“The elixir of eternal life is good, of course,” I was out of sorts and very angry. “But why didn't you give it to your pharaohs, and even then... it doesn't look like you're so eager for this eternal life.”

“We don't force you to accept it, it's the will of each of us. And not everyone is offered it.” The priest said gloomily and added with a sigh. “This is the lot of the chosen, and even they do not always bear such a burden. The elixir still needs to be earned.” “Moses and Christ did not deserve it, as I understand it.”

“Moses is a proud man and a sorcerer!” The priest exclaimed fervently. “In his excessive ambition, he dreamed of taking the place of the High Priest and ruling the Pharaoh, but according to the laws, a half-breed could not be a High Priest, only an Egyptian by blood, and the priests appointed another one. And then Moses began to take revenge! He needed our shrine, the Casket of Power! To take over the whole world! He stole the Rod too! Proud and deceitful, he hid from his people that he was a priest of Osiris and received all the secret knowledge in this temple, and not on Mount Sinai. He hid the fact of his theft even from his people, and taking advantage of the stupidity of the people, presented these shrines as a gift from his god.

But the gods punished him and his people. Until the end of his days, he wandered through the desert, never receiving either the coveted throne or his kingdom. In his book, he did not write the name of the pharaoh who allegedly died in the waters of the Reed Sea with his army, because there is no such pharaoh in history. All the names are preserved in the annals. Ramesses II rushed in pursuit of the relics, but Moses, skirting the sea from the north, from the marshy sands, hiding in dense thickets of reeds, led the people to the south of the Arabian desert, and Ramesses went north, and reached Kadesh.

When it became clear where the traitor lived, Pharaoh's spies tracked him down, waited for his next long absence from Sinai, and stole the Casket from the tabernacle, replacing it with a simple box. Upon his return, Moses discovered the loss, becoming enraged, under the pretext of a rebel plot, he ordered the execution of 24,000 of his tribesmen, but he could not admit to the people that he had lost. So they dragged this fake across the desert, and then from city to city, believing in its magic."

"I didn't understand, which Pharaoh? Ramses or Ramesses?"

"Ramesses II, Son of Seti I and Queen Tuya, 19th dynasty, returned the Casket, restored and strengthened the power of Egypt."

"Let's leave this sad fact in history. It's been a long time, you don't have a Great Ark either."

"The casket has long since returned to its rightful place, glory to Ramesses II. He ordered the Casket to be permanently removed and immured deep in one of the temples. The relic is safely hidden. And let them look for him anywhere. No one will know about his whereabouts anymore."

"Tell me the purpose of your visit today. Yes, and what about my friends, where are they, why can't I meet them?"

"Each of you will pass your final test and get the right to decide whether to stay here or return to your world. Your last test is coming soon. Respect everything you see."

And he led me through a long series of galleries and sanctuaries that make up an entire underground city. We wandered through the high halls for a long and tedious time, the hierophant lectured me on the deities of Egypt, the laws of movement of the luminaries of the solar zodiac, and so on. I'm pretty tired.

When we came to a large dark door, the priest said solemnly: "Here, behind this door, the Emerald Tablets are kept, on them are recorded all the knowledge of the antediluvian race of people, the chronicles of even earlier times, and all the secrets of the stars, heaven and earth. And a very small number of initiates are allowed to know the secrets of the world order. People were given only a small fraction of this vast knowledge."

"And how did Moses not get to these Tablets?"

"He really wanted to take them too. The gods did not allow this theft. Then the Great Priest died, protecting the secret from invasion. Moses killed him, but he couldn't open the door. Then, having led several tribesmen through secret passages, he managed to seize the Casket and escape."

"That's a thief, a falsifier of history."

"That's right. Power over the world and falsifying history in his favor, that was his goal. An ardent admirer of Akhenaten's religion of monotheism, he was extremely vain. He wanted to become a king, and for this he raised an uprising of his people."

"And he almost achieved his goal. History is the most violated science, as one of our historians once said. And why did you let Christ go?"

"Well," my guide continued after hesitating, "he didn't pass the final test either, by the way, just like Moses. And they let him go so that he could create another religion."

As we moved through the galleries and halls, the light grew fainter and fainter until we were almost in total darkness. Here the priest took my hand and said reverently, "We have come to the sanctuary of our goddess Isis. Here you will receive a revelation, a Secret of Secrets, you will be left alone in total darkness. Staying awake half the night, you will spend in meditation and prepare

yourself for the terrible moment when the sacred Veils will fall on you.” And after these words, the priest solemnly ascended the steps to the gallery.

“Oh, oh,” I watched him go, “how you scared me, A Mystery of Secrets, a terrible moment. Don’t think I’m a fool. I know very well what a terrible ordeal this is.”

Yes, I do not dispute that a woman specially trained to seduce a man is still a test for a man. The initiate will stand, he has passed the initiation completely, but he will not stand and... here is the question, what will they do to him for the physical possession of the priestess? Moses couldn’t resist, and I think he even enjoyed it. Hence the myth that Moses seduced either the Pharaoh’s daughter or the daughter of a priest, for which he was expelled from the temple. In retaliation, he raised his people to revolt, and very successfully, and even captured a gesheft in the form of an Ark. But with Christ, history is silent. But there is no doubt that he was here, in these labyrinths. I know that a woman should be here right now. Beautiful as a dream itself, the ideal of beauty for the man under test. And it was not for nothing that they showed me this beauty there in the valley. According to the test conditions, this particular girl should appear.

Chapter 5

I peered hopefully into the darkness. She should appear, I need to make her my ally. And let her help me find my friends, get out of here with me. But will I be able to convince her of this, maybe she is an ardent follower of her cult. It’s going to be a bummer, it’s time for me to appear as a seducer.

While I was thinking this way, I came across a pillar in the dark and leaned against it, waiting. Suddenly, light flickered along the walls, as if a curtain were rising in one corner of the hall, a female figure flashed there and seemed to disappear again. At the sound of light footsteps, my heart began to race. I no longer doubted that this was her, my dream, my ideal of feminine beauty.

As if in clouds of smoke, the girl was slowly approaching. She danced, lasciviously swaying her hips, gracefully waving her arms with ringing bracelets and bells, tapping her heels to the beat of castanets. She was wearing a semi-transparent robe, intercepted by a luxurious belt with tassels on her hips, and she was already dancing so fast that it was almost impossible to see her face. Stopping abruptly, she stood in front of me at a short distance.

Despite the slender figure of the young girl, there was an unfathomable regal beauty about her. Her thin, almost childish arms were covered with bracelets, her black hair was braided into small pigtails, and on her chest hung an amulet — a figurine with a seven-tailed whip in her hands. The amulet of the priestess of Isis.

Softly swaying her hips, she stepped forward a little, holding out her arms to me in inviting movements. She was breathing evenly, and only the blush on her cheeks showed the fire of her body. Her burning gaze slid over my figure with a mysterious expression. There was no question of my calm state either. I was completely restless, and I couldn’t take my eyes off the beauty. Why, I was just devouring her with my eyes. I swear, it was simply impossible to resist such an inviting beauty. I took a step towards her.

The girl stood on tiptoe and touched my face with a swift light kiss. Then she started dancing and fluttering around me again, sometimes leaning back, sometimes throwing her head back. She danced with her eyes half-closed, her limp hands exhausted, her hair flying in all directions. It was as if she were not a strict priestess, but a Bacchante. With her dancing, she conveyed everything — love, sensuality, ardent passion, and promises of incredible happiness. My heart was beating violently and some kind of unfamiliar but powerful feeling was taking over my whole being.

The girl stopped abruptly in front of me again. Her eyes shone with heat and voluptuousness, and a burning flame radiated from her entire body, which aroused. This flame immediately spread to me, I was shaking all over, I stretched out my hands to this creature. She came closer and took off her veil, Strangely, but the belt inexplicably remained on her hips. The girl became more and more beautiful, burned stronger and stronger, her chest heaved more and more often, all this gave her extraordinary brilliance and seduction.

She was of perfect beauty, and of the purest Egyptian type. Shiny, almond-shaped eyes, a thin, elegant nose and puffy lips. It seemed to me that I had never seen a face of such breathtaking demonic beauty. Large, velvet-black eyes with long lashes and an unbearable brilliance stared at me intently. Finally, she stretched out her arms to me, and I felt her hot embrace, my eyes burned into that burning radiance of her eyes. She tore off my tunic, and I was drowning in her bare breasts, everything in me was boiling, all my senses were strained like a string, her hands wandered over my body — and I gave up

Afterwards, with the slightest recollection of those minutes, my composure left me. With extraordinary skill, she made me a slave, aroused me, and she herself flared up in my arms with real passion, I completely lost control of myself, and more and more dissolved into her. And the girl was melting more and more into passionate raptures from my burning kisses and daring hands, and our hearts merged together.

It was only after a while that we began to cool down in our passion. I was the first to come out of a passionate swoon, and I was still weakly recovering, sitting with my head in my hands and swaying to somehow relieve the remnants of tension. Finally, she woke up, already assuming an indifferent look, as if leaving me no hope for the future.

I got up, turned her around and took her head in my hands, carefully examining her face. The obsession abruptly left me. It wasn't the girl I saw in my visions. The wrong one, damn it! Another. What's the catch? Why was such a substitution made? I was stunned, but not disappointed. Although the face of this beauty was familiar to me. I've definitely met her somewhere. And at the same time, how similar she is to that one, how similar. Very. But it's not her for sure. Wow, what a strange obsession I experienced when she appeared, how my mind instantly turned off. She's a genius seductress, no doubt about it.

And then the unexpected happened. The girl put her finger to her lips and showed me that I should be silent, then she quietly took my hand and whispered: "Come on, I'll take you to your friends and help you get out of here."

I stood at a loss and did not think clearly, in fact, by that moment I was already completely ready to perform another action again, what she so persistently called me to do with her appearance and body. I didn't know how to interpret her words, provocation, or miraculous rescue. At this time, the girl had already wrapped herself in her clothes. Without further thought, I obeyed and staggered after her. My fate was now in her hands, and the fate of my friends.

The girl quickened her pace, and we moved silently through the winding dark galleries, dimly lit by lamps on the columns. Suddenly she stopped, and in a broken whisper she said, "Your friend Sergei is here, and the girls in the other half, the women's half, are being trained to become priestesses of our goddess."

I almost screamed. Priestesses! What the hell kind of priestesses! They're sly bastards, these priests drugged them or something. Sergey was lying on the couch with a dejected look, when he saw me, he jumped up, but noticing my sign to be silent, he stopped with his mouth open. I quietly waved my hand, indicating to follow me. We raced through the dark corridors again.

The girl stopped again and signaled us to be careful and stay in place: "Wait here," she said softly and disappeared behind the curtain.

"Where the hell did you go?" Sergei whispered to me, "I almost lost my mind. There are no girls, you're not here, and there are these young cherubs with sweet faces all around."

"We were separated while we were sleeping." "Did everyone sleep so that they didn't feel anything? What kind of gas was allowed into the room?" "Maybe."

A few minutes later, a girl appeared with our girlfriends. Elsa silently threw her arms around Sergei's neck. Lida stood like a somnambulist. This adventure seemed to have a bad effect on her.

"What's your name?" I turned to our guide.

“Nuita,” my beauty answered briefly, then paused a little, looked at me questioningly, and mournful folds formed at the corners of her beautiful mouth, “don’t you remember?”

No, I didn’t remember, and this question put me in a bit of a stupor. She handed us the bags of our clothes and motioned for us to follow her. I had no doubt that we would get out of this underground world, and Nuita was helping us. Maybe she’s tired of being here.

Our way lay up the narrow slimy steps. This path seemed endless, but the girl stopped and opened a small door. It was not an entrance, but a small hole, but diving into it, we were pleased to feel the real earth wind blowing.

“Everyone, sit down here,” and Nuita pointed to the cart on wheels.

Then I saw that it was a cart standing on rails. “A miracle of hostile technology,” as our unforgettable Alexei Vitalievich would say. We quickly jumped into this miracle, there was a snap of a spring, it was Nuita who was setting some kind of mechanism in motion, the cart jerked, suddenly took off and rushed down into the darkness.

“That reminds me of something!” Sergei shouted over the screeching and screeching of the wheels on the turns. “A roller coaster?” Elsa shouted.

“No, Indiana Jones. I just don’t want us to jump out into some cliff above a river teeming with crocodiles!”

Really! We sometimes took our breath away on turns. But our transport smoothly drove into the sand and stopped. We found ourselves in a cave, at the exit of which the blue water of the lake could be seen. A real terrestrial lake. After leaving the cave, we discovered that we were on an island.

“What kind of island is this?” I turned to Nuita. “This is Bige Island, and you can see the entrance to the temple of Osiris, but the way there is dangerous, no one comes out.”

“However, the girl speaks Russian well,” Sergei remarked.

“They all spoke Russian to us from the very beginning, didn’t you notice?”

“We are being trained, and each new adept is assigned a guru who speaks his language.”

“And how did you become a priestess of Isis?”

“I don’t know, I’ve been there all my life, as long as I can remember.”

“Why did you decide to help us?”

Nuita didn’t answer that question, just stared into my eyes. I couldn’t stand the look in those eyes. A hot wave of excitement swept through me again. I love her, I want her, I want her by my side all my life.

“How do we get out of here further?” “Let’s look for a boat.” Everyone started to change into their mundane clothes, only Nuita remained in her translucent cape.

“Nuita, put on Lida’s robe.” Don’t tempt the people with your beauty,

I jealously handed her the robe. This is my woman, and as a true male, I don’t want other men to admire Nuita’s body.

My pet fetchy helpers came out of the pockets of my windbreaker. Oh, how glad I was to see them. I immediately felt for an object and took it out. It was the Eye of Ra. Nuita, seeing the amulet, started in fright.

“Where did you get the Eye of Ra?”

“Where did you get the Eye of Ra?”

“Some Arab handed it to me on the streets of Cairo. And what?” “It’s dangerous to keep it with you.” “Why, what is its danger? Doesn’t it protect you from danger?”

“It’s not an amulet, it’s a key.” Nuita repeated Klaus’ words.

“The key? And which door does he open?”

“The door to the past centuries.”

“Nuita, you’re talking in riddles,” Sergey listened attentively to our conversation, “is it possible to get into the past times with this key?”

Nuita looked around fearfully, “We need to hurry before the priests start chasing us. I messed up the mechanism of that cart, and the priests won’t be able to put it back in its original place for a long time. But we’d better leave now.” Meanwhile, I was looking at the steps leading down into the darkness of a small hill next to us. And I quietly started going down there.

“Hey, are you looking for an adventure on your ass again?” Elsa was excited, “aren’t you tired? It’s time to get out of here, before the priests really send a chase after us.”

“Don’t go there,” Nuita sounded worried. “What’s in there?”

“There is the tomb of the Great Osiris, and no one dares to invade it, Isis takes revenge and punishes the brave souls who dared to encroach on the holy of holies, there is a great Mystery. Isis protected the tomb with spells and poisonous gases.”

“There are great mysteries all around, I remember, quite recently, a priest also promised me a Secret from the Mysteries behind the Great Veil. And you came out of there, Nuita. Although I don’t mind such secrecy. I won’t go far there, just take a look.”

“And how is it that the archaeologists have not yet reached this tomb,” Sergei came down with me. The girls stayed at the entrance.

“Maybe it’s true, Isida doesn’t allow it. I remember a group of British disappeared here in the 1920s.”

Chapter 6

Going deep into the pit, we found a door sealed with an ancient seal with the name of Osiris. In the center was a recess, which in shape and size exactly matched our amulet. “So this is the Golden key to the secret door behind the canvas in Papa Carlo’s closet,” Sergei and I joked. I reached out to insert the key into the slot, but Sergey stopped me.

“Don’t, not now at least. We need to leave, in case the priests really are organizing a chase.” “By and large, they shouldn’t. We didn’t pass the tests, they send us back from the labyrinths themselves. But Nuita may well be in danger, and the priests may not forgive her for running away.” And we went back.

“What’s up? What did you find?” Lida whispered impatiently, “we’ve already been through a lot of fear here. Let’s get out of here.” “They found the door with the seal of Osiris.” “Shall we come in?” There was a hellish light in Elsa’s eyes.

“Look, I’ve got a taste for it.”

“But it’s dangerous!” Nuita exclaimed.

“Something tells me, intuition or something, that Klaus didn’t just send us into the mazes,” Sergei reasoned matter — of-factly, “we need to take a chance.”

“Oh, I wasn’t, let’s go.” Something also pushed me to this adventure. “Klaus is a cunning guy, he dragged us to Egypt for a walk under the pyramids for a reason. And he said he’d be waiting for us at a certain place. But there’s no sign of him here.”

And the whole group of us went down and went to the door. I took out the amulet key, and with trembling hands inserted it into the notch. The door opened. No, she just disappeared, disappeared, as if she had never existed. There was a deep silence, as if the world around us had frozen and become numb. The feeling of modern life has disappeared.

“The time is out of joint.” Sergei whispered and added, “Shakespeare. Hamlet.”

Some kind of religious horror seized us, as if the hourglass of Eternity had turned over and carried us into the centuries of history. The walls of the hall were covered with murals and hieroglyphs, symbolic paintings of the procession of souls. Torches burned near the flat ceiling. It was a strange and magnificent sight. The gilded walls of the hall were ablaze with beauty. Red, white, and blue colors carved on the gilt surrounded the figures of people and animals. The walls seemed to be covered with colorful wallpaper, and the freshness of the colors, which had not been lost in time, struck with extraordinary purity and vivacity.

It seemed that Isis was shaking her arms decorated with bird feathers, beetles were beginning to spread their wings and were about to take off, the arks of the gods were moving on skids or floating in the waves of the river, and half-naked rowers were swinging their oars, lotuses were slowly opening their buds. All these frozen movements at the same time were animated in an incomprehensible way.

On both sides, small rooms-niches were cut into the rock, filled with funerary figurines made of enameled clay and bronze. Crossing the hall, we came to a staircase with steep steps leading us down to a gallery also painted with hieroglyphs and figures. At the end of this gallery there is another staircase leading to another room. The interminably long corridors alternated with rooms, and in the middle of them were deep wells, to which we descended by spiral stairs. These wells led us back to rooms and galleries.

“Where are we going, no, well, where are we going? Eh?” muttered Sergei. “Time seems to have disappeared, and there is no end to our journey.”

“I’m already tired, and so are the girls,” Elsa echoed him. Nuita and Lida maintained a doomed silence.

But now we came out into a hall so vast and vast that it seemed there was no end to it. Gigantic columns stretched as far as the eye could see. Between these columns, the great lords of ancient times sat on thrones. Their mummies were perfectly preserved, they looked quite alive. On their heads were golden tiaras, breastplates embroidered with precious stones. Behind the pharaohs stood groups of their subjects, accompanied by animals — cats, birds, crocodiles with bracelets on their paws. Probably all the pharaohs reigning in Egypt of all times were here. But further on, on a high platform, sat absolutely gigantic figures of the gods. The strange vision that I experienced as a child came back to my memory. A huge cave with giants in the city of the sons of Enoch in the mountains of the Levant, where I was initiated into the secret of the blue blood dynasties, coming from Cain, the son of Eve and Lucifer.

“Who’s that?” I whispered. Something unusual, incredible power emanated from these statues, “some unknown gods, or kings?” And then, as if hearing my words, one of the gigantic statues seemed to come to life. Lifting her heavy eyelids, she fixed her gaze on us.

“Who are you, and what business are you here for? From which country?” The voice of this elder suddenly thundered. Everyone froze in fright.

“We... we...,” I mumbled, “we’re from a new world, I didn’t know what to say next, “from the 21st century of modern times.”

“New times?! New Times... You who have forgotten how to preserve your flesh, you whose bodies are only a handful of dust, have come here. Look, you see before you the pharaohs who reigned many centuries ago, you see before you the kings who have reigned on earth since before the flood, since the time of Adam, his son Cain, who built the city of Baalata with a temple in honor of his son Enoch, known to you as Baalbek. And there, in the depths of the Lebanese Mountains, there are 72 kings with their seventy-two peoples who reigned on earth even before Adam. So what’s your purpose in coming here? Do you need the treasures so desired in your world? Do you also want to take the Casket of Power, which you call the Ark? Or do you need the same Staff or Wand?”

I’m emboldened, the main thing is not to give in to fear, they don’t like it. “I need the Elixir of Life!” I suddenly blurted out. But what the hell do I need it for? How did my tongue twitch? But the words are like a sparrow, yes, they flew out of my mouth.

“Ha ha ha! He’s an impudent bastard,” the patriarch drawled, “really, and why do you need him, and how did your tongue twitch?” There was sarcasm in his words. He clearly read my mind. “You had it in your hands twice, but you didn’t use it for yourself. With this tool, you saved the lives of nine people. And now you’ve been given a third chance, and once again you’ll value your friend’s life more than yours.” The giant paused, lost in thought. “Okay, you’ll get what you ask for.” As if waking up, the elder continued. “So use it wisely this time, and remember... one drop saves a life,

three drops give power. Go back, you'll find him there." An hourglass appeared in his hands, and he turned it over and slammed it down next to him on the arm of his throne.

Relieved, we turned around and walked along the rows of pharaohs, and it seemed that grins were playing on their faces. Did we lose our way, or were we deliberately led through other corridors, but suddenly we found ourselves in a huge funeral hall. A gigantic sarcophagus stood majestically in the middle of the hall, its walls were covered with drawings of fine knitting, as if in openwork rings. My imagination refused to understand how those ancient people could carve such filigree drawings on basalt. It's impossible to do this with iron tools, and back then they only knew bronze.

On the four sides of the sarcophagus were finely crafted vases with the heads of Egyptian gods. I could only recognize Anubis, and that was the end of my knowledge. And in the center, on the lid, stood a golden rook, on which rested the head of Osiris, with a braided beard, and on each side of the outstretched bow of the rook, the eye of the god Ra looked at us. Several large caskets stood on the lid next to the rook. There were statues of women on the right and left of the sarcophagus. One of them clearly depicted Isis.

"If we're in the tomb of Osiris now, then this is the greatest discovery in archaeology," Sergei whispered in amazement.

"Don't even think about reporting or writing about it in public. Say thank you if they let us get out of here alive," I said.

A rustle distracted us from our contemplation of the tomb. A young man stood by the wall with a niche, bowing his head in a pose of deep reverence. He was wearing a kind of skirt, wrapped tightly several times around his hips with many folds, tied at the waist with a leather belt with gold plates, and his naked torso was shiny and smooth, as if carved by a skilled craftsman. "That's a man," Elsa drawled admiringly, and catching herself, she glanced guiltily in the direction of her husband.

The young man said something, and bending almost to the ground, handed over a small chest inlaid with enamel and gold plates. We exchanged glances, I shrugged my shoulders and approached the young man. He knelt down and placed the chest on the floor in front of me... and was gone. "Have you all been taught this trick, like disappearing into thin air?" I asked Nuita a question.

She didn't answer, her gaze was fixed on the box.

"Well, let's see what's in there?" I opened the lid. In the chest, on a satin pillow, there was a small bottle carved from ivory, all covered with an openwork pattern with a hair-thin gold wire, and a cord was tied to the sealed neck. Something far away stirred in my memory again and immediately melted away.

"And remember... one drop will save your life, three drops will give you power," the giant's words seemed to echo in my ears as I hung this bottle around my neck, hiding it under my shirt.

"What's that? The elixir? Why do you need it?" Lida asked with undisguised interest in her voice.

"I don't know."

"Maybe Klaus needs him, and that's why he sent us into this wilderness." Sergey suggested thoughtfully.

"Maybe, maybe..." I put the chest on the table next to it. "Where should we go now? Unclear."

As if in answer to my question, a wrought-iron gate appeared in the place where the young Egyptian appeared and then mysteriously disappeared. Beyond it was a garden. We entered, and the path led us into a lavishly furnished pavilion that looked more like a room. In the middle of the room was a round table and chairs made of gilded wood. And to the side there are several sofas with lots of pillows. There were large vases of fine workmanship in the form of figures of girls. There were fresh flowers in all the vases. Everyone was immediately overwhelmed by a feeling of incredible fatigue from their walk, which lasted for an unknown amount of time. We definitely lost track of time, and everyone just collapsed on these sofas, no longer thinking about any danger. Everyone really wanted to rest and get some sleep.

I paced up and down the room, more mechanically than consciously, trying to make sense of these amazing incidents, but my head was still in chaos, and the only thing looming was Klaus' personality. Suddenly, the noise of the crowd outside, beyond the terrace, broke the silence. Sergei and I approached the balustrade, and an incredibly stunning picture opened before our eyes.

Joyful excitement reigned in the streets of the ancient city. All the houses were decorated with garlands of flowers and palm branches, and the doors and flat roofs of the houses, which served as terraces for their residents, were decorated with flowers. Music could be heard everywhere. Dressed-up residents of the city crowded the streets. The spilling of the Nile was celebrated. The waters of the Great River overflowed its banks, flooded the fields, promising a bountiful harvest to the country.

A huge crowd gathered on the shore, and it grew, everyone tried to be as close as possible to the wide staircase, to which a large gilded vessel moored. Everyone turned to the shore, and deafening screams rang out. A procession appeared on the stairs, priests were descending it, followed by dignitaries and warriors. They all boarded the boats that were located at the royal vessel. Then a luxurious stretcher decorated with gold inlay appeared under the canopy. Fans of ostrich feathers, mounted in special gilded sticks, waved around the stretcher. On this throne, which was carried by a dozen slaves, sat the Pharaoh.

Pharaoh!!, Priests!! How familiar this whole picture was to me, I had recently seen it in the labyrinth room, and it seemed to rise again from the distant depths of my memory.

Sergei and I turned to each other, and the same thought struck us like lightning. "The hourglass! He turned over the hourglass!" Sergei exclaimed.

Chapter 7

"Hey! Time travelers!" We pushed the girls aside, "Let's get out of here! Run, run!" The girls looked at us dumbfounded. At the same time, Nuita was not among them. She disappeared in the most mysterious way.

"Listen, Maxim, and how cleverly she dragged us here. Oh, I'm afraid, I'm afraid it's dangerous. That's a cunning beast!" Sergey was indignant.

"What's the matter?" Elsa was muttering.

"Because, my dear, it looks like we've been transported back about three thousand years. Run back, run. Until the hourglass has completely poured out its sand."

"If the sand in this watch has not yet completely poured out." I said gloomily. "But we'll try to get back."

"They won't succeed!" Sergei growled angrily.

Everyone rushed back to the tomb of Osiris, and completely irreverently, without curtsying, they galloped past the sarcophagus to the spiral staircase. I was a little late, and resolutely took with me a chest for a bottle of elixir. Crossing the halls, we raced through the galleries like nimble monkeys climbing up the steep steps of wells. Interminably long corridors, painted galleries, and wells led us back to rooms and galleries. There seemed to be no end to this run. The sounds of a heavy gong rang out behind us at strictly defined intervals, counting down the last minutes.

"Now it's like in a fairy tale, we will all turn into pumpkins and mice," we must pay tribute to Sergei, he could still joke. But everyone was desperately silent.

And now a hole appeared in front of us, and through it the sky was blue, the native, earthly sky of the 21st century. With a vengeance, we rushed to the exit. And as soon as I was the last to cross the cherished threshold, and we all came to the surface, the last gong of the time clock sounded.

We looked around, smoke seemed to be billowing in the opening, and gradually the outlines of a door with a key hole in the shape of the boat of the god Ra appeared. Panting, we fell to the ground.

"We made it, fuuu," the girls muttered.

"You still ventured through that door," Klaus's voice rang out, "I didn't doubt you at all."

"Why didn't you show up on time?" Elsa was indignant.

"I came on time," Klaus laughed, "you would have persuaded me to wait for you here anyway until your adventurous spirit was fully satisfied. To be on the island of Bige, and not try to find the tomb of Osiris. Yes, this is the dream of all archaeologists in the world. And you, mere mortals, have been given such a chance."

"Ordinary mortals could stay there forever."

"It's true, you had such a risk. By the way, a couple of expeditions in the twenties of the last century suffered just such a fate. But they didn't have me, Klaus Staufkettel, as their assistant. And do you have. I would have gotten you out of there."

"Ah, well, you seem to be on good terms with Osiris and those gods in the dungeons. In particular, with that bearded man with an hourglass in his hands."

"Well, not for a short time. But I could have gotten you out. By the way, the bearded man with the hourglass, whom you even had the honor to talk to, is Chronos."

"It's terrible what progress has come to, you can just talk to Chronos about this and that, or with Zeus, for example."

"I appreciated your sarcasm. But, we really can't delay anymore. Everyone run to the boat, a helicopter is waiting for us on the other shore, and if you hesitate, the local police will take you by the white knuckles for invading tombs without a proper license. Hurry up."

We were already taking off when police cars actually drove up to the site. Having gained altitude, the helicopter flew smoothly, and this flight was even pleasant for us. We felt completely safe and confident, aware of ourselves in the modern world of the 21st century. And no matter how much they scolded modern civilization, this civilization was ours, our native one, as if we had returned to our native land from a distant space flight. The lights of Cairo were already visible, but the helicopter continued its flight.

"Klaus, where are we going?" "To Alexandria," he replied.

"Why to Alexandria? What about our stuff at the hotel?"

"They're already at the hotel in Alexandria, don't worry. I haven't forgotten any of your things," he turned around and looked at me attentively with a slight grin. I read a silent question in his eyes. But I wasn't going to answer that question. The treasured vial was hidden under my shirt, and I was clutching a beautiful chest tightly in my hands. If Klaus needed him so much, then why didn't he go after him? He obviously sent me into the mazes for that reason.

All night I was tormented by strange visions, a pharaoh, priests, a beautiful girl dancing in front of me. In the morning, after breakfast, I had an obsessive need to draw a portrait of Tianta. Her eyes haunted me relentlessly.

After fixing the canvas on the easel, I began to mix the colors on the palette with a strange irritation. I couldn't find the exact shade of the girl's skin, capture that look of shining eyes, intense and burning, to convey the color of her hair, black as the dead of night. I worked on the portrait so furiously, as if the solution of some mystery depended on it. This mystery wouldn't let go of me. The painful uncertainty, the understatement of the visions in the pyramids weighed on me. Working on the portrait, it was as if I was trying to break through the veil of a fatal mystery.

A few hours of hard work exhausted me, and I dropped the brushes and went to wash my hands. Then, I went up to the portrait, and looking at it, I noticed a strange effect in it. Wearily, I rubbed my face with my hands and went out onto the balcony. I'm just tired. Still, the walk under the pyramids was very stressful. From the balcony, I watched my friends playing tennis on the court. It's a very energetic sport, and I've never been good at it. And how women handle such a heavy racket.

There was a knock on the door, and I opened it. Klaus was standing in the doorway. "I'd like to see this portrait of a girl," he said. "Of course, if you don't mind."

"Who told you that I was working on a portrait?" I let him into the room.

"It wasn't hard to guess from your face at breakfast. You were sitting at the table, among your friends, and quite automatically participated in the conversation. And you were far, very far away."

“Come on,” I said briefly, “I’ll show you my painting.”

I’ll tell you right away, I painted a very strange portrait. I went to the easel and turned it so that the portrait was clearly visible. It seems that instead of the perfect beauty of the girl that I saw in my vision, I could only portray a strange cruelty.

Klaus fixed his gaze on the portrait, and an exclamation of surprise or mockery escaped him. “There are two girls on this canvas at the same time, don’t you understand?” He said, “death and two lives, both have an irresistible magnetism in their eyes. But one of them has a painful look, the other has a sensuality of the eyes accompanied by a cruel crooked smile of the lips.”

A few minutes passed in complete silence, then Klaus said: “I’m leaving, and you should sort out your women. There are two women in the portrait — Tianta and Nuita. And it’s not because you’ve seen them both in mazes, and their images are mixed up in your head. This is because both of them are the main women for you in the destinies of your different incarnations. Two rivals, both in your heart, but the best part of your heart belongs to Tianta. Nuita will never forgive you for this.”

And with that, he headed for the exit. His words hurt me.

“Listen to me! How do you know about Tianta and Nuit? I’ve never told you what I saw under the pyramids. And anyway, I hate the rivalry of two women for one man. I think this is stupid, because these women are not at all interested in a man’s opinion. Women are always fighting among themselves on this vital tatami, it is important for each to win and destroy the other. And a man is a prize for them, that’s all.”

“I don’t need to tell you about your adventures. I already know. As for your dislike of the rivalry of women, well, that’s why you don’t give anyone magical help in love spells. Your deep memory, you know, doesn’t allow you to do that. You hate the tenacity of these women because you yourself have suffered from this rivalry in past lives, and more than once, I must say.”

“Weren’t Tianta and Nuita the same woman in that pyramid encounter?” We don’t necessarily assume the same appearance in different lives. Nuita mysteriously appeared and mysteriously disappeared, but I will meet her. I know, I feel it. She’s already taken over my heart, and I think she’s always been there. There, in the pyramids, I understood the meaning of this last test. A symbol of Adam’s seduction by Eve, after she ate the cherished apple. Adam couldn’t resist then, and gave humanity the great mystery of passion. A real passion, such as a real woman can inspire, and it will forever remain in a man’s heart.”

“I told you, they are two different women, and both are in your heart. But the best part of it is given to Tianta. Why? You need to figure it out for yourself. But Nuita is not only not going to give up the part of your heart she occupies, she needs full power over your heart.” After a pause, Klaus added, “she’s a very active person, not like Tianta. Tianta is Lilith, who ran away from Adam, even in your case in a tragic way, Nuita is a jealous Eve. They don’t always attract men. Do you believe in eternal love? Many good women believe in her. They want to be Eve, but Adam always remembered Lilith, and this annoyed Eve very much, so she ate the apple. She really wanted to outshine Lilith forever. If a woman subconsciously has a fear of losing her man, it results in seemingly gratuitous jealousy, which means she feels his Lilith is somewhere nearby, very close. It scares and irritates a woman. Eve was always afraid that Adam would leave her as soon as Lilith returned. “After saying that, Klaus left.

I looked at the portrait again, it was like an annoying memory for me — terrible and ghostly. The portrait got on my nerves. In one person, two girls looked directly into my eyes, their gazes burning through me, and at the same time overwhelm me with inexplicable horror with their attractive gaze.

This Klaus is a strange guy. He brought us here, easily pays for our trips, all our whims. And here in Alexandria, we live in a small old manor house near the famous catacombs. And I have a suspicion that this is not a private hotel, but his own estate. That’s how the servants crawl in front of Klaus. Although he exudes such magnetism that everyone freezes even for a second when meeting him.

When he appeared at the wedding of Elsa and Sergey, he captivated our attention with his majesty at first glance. This grandeur was felt in everything, in his height and manner, his charming

manner, and the almost fiery gleam of his dark eyes in his somewhat pale face. Elsa immediately called his appearance demonic, I would say Luciferian. We had just returned from France, after my investigation of the admiral's case at his castle.

Chapter 8

After I solved the mystery of the portraits at Admiral Koptev's residence in France, Elsa and I returned home to Crimea. Irina went to her city, where her little son was eagerly awaiting her in the company of his grandfather.

Sergei, then still Elsa's fiancé, met us at the airport. And in the evening, at the table, he listened with admiration to the narration from the lips of his bride. But when he learned about the admiral's courtship of Elsa, he feigned terrible jealousy, and promised not to let his beloved visit any barons without a wedding ring. Elsa was all lit up with happiness, the wedding day was set, and the couple chose a trip to the castle of the baron, a friend of our admiral, as their honeymoon. Even before we parted, the admiral promised me a new investigation, which I cannot refuse. So our fun campaign has been living all these days in anticipation of the pleasure of the upcoming trip.

For two weeks I had to endure the slight nagging of my Lidochka. Of course, she was offended that I didn't take her to France with me. But now I firmly promised my girlfriend that she would definitely come with us on the next adventure.

One evening, someone rang the doorbell of my apartment. I was annoyed, because at that time I was talking on a video call with Irina. Once again, Irina complained to me that I did not help her resolve the issue of their relationship with Alexei exactly the way she wanted it. And she didn't take my explanations in any way. That's what she wants, period

It was at this time that the saving bell rang, interrupting these inflections, which I was already tired of.

"What's the matter?" I barked, throwing open the door. "Oh! If I was lucky, I was so lucky," I immediately got kinder when I saw Elsa on the doorstep in the company of a pretty girl.

"Hey, Maxim, what happened to your face?" Elsa stepped into the hall, followed by her friend. "Let me guess, you just talked to Ira. And she ruined your aura again."

"Worse, she ruined my karma."

"Why are you so modestly avoiding Faith? Didn't you recognize your former patient? No, well, what's the result, huh? You should be proud of your work! And stop staring at her, and let us into the house normally. Give me some coffee. We don't mind having dinner either. What do you have in the fridge?" And Elsa went busily into the kitchen.

"Faith!!? I see a familiar face. But! Faith! Wow!"

Faith was smiling, and she walked modestly, but not without coquetry, into the living room. Really! I didn't expect such a result myself. It's only been six months since Elsa first came to me with a request to look at Faith's problem.

Six months ago, a fat 85 kg girl with thin greasy hair and a depressive-suicidal mood sat in front of me. The girl abruptly began to get fat over the course of several months, by nature a giggler, always on the positive side, turned into an intimidated chicken. Elsa then dragged her to me literally by the hand. Faith is terrified of magic.

"Max, look at her, maybe she has something from her mother. They have an extremely bad relationship, the mother has not loved her daughter since childhood. And now he's just mocking her appearance. Her mother has a second marriage. Well, it's just like Inna's, remember?" Elsa told me then. "Until recently, Faith weighed 49 kg. And now! Do you see? There's a reason for this!"

"I have a purely personal matter," Faith interjected.

"Everyone's business is strictly personal. And everyone comes to me because they can't achieve anything in the usual way".

A picture of shop windows with advertisements in English suddenly floated before my eyes, then a bracelet and runes flashed by.

“It doesn’t look like it’s from your mother. Faith, have you traveled abroad recently?”

“Yes, for a week with a girlfriend, in Scotland. I’ve never been abroad. And then by chance I was offered two discounted tours. Well, my friend and I went. It was winter.”

“And?” the information was difficult to reveal, there was a good lock on the witchcraft. “Remember where you went, who you talked to. Then it dawned on me, did you go to the hairdresser?”

“Oh, yes, exactly, as I forgot. It was a friend who wanted to dye her hair there. I was just sitting on the couch in the hall.” Faith paused again. “We need to remember more.”

“Did you sit in the hairdresser’s chair?”

“No, not really. I was just drinking coffee while I was waiting for Nadia.”

“Did someone talk to you?”

“I remember! An elderly woman came into the hall with a girl, I think her granddaughter. She looked about 15 years old. She looked around and sat next to me. After a couple of minutes, she started praising me, admiring how slim I was, and how long my beautiful hair was. He touches my hair and says, “Only the tips need to be cut off a little.” I said I wouldn’t cut anything. Then a friend came over, and we went to the mall together. And there this old woman and the girl caught up with us.

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