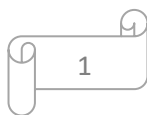


THE BLUE LIGHT

It was a little after 7 AM when Teresa arrived at the tourist port of Palma. Although the summer was almost over, it was still quite warm outside for this time of year. That morning, she had woken up earlier than usual. She had tried to sleep for at least another hour, but she couldn't. Whenever she closed her eyes Prashant's face was always there. Not knowing how to handle the situation on her own, she decided to do a diving session in the sea, far from the Mediterranean coast. Her wounds were not completely healed, but neither did they prevent her from carrying out her plan to the end. She knew that she hadn't planned a day off during this time, but it didn't matter anymore. Alex already knew how to find her in case she disappeared from the "*Network*" and Prashant seemed to be doing very well without her online presence. Because she didn't want to be located by the "*System*", she took out the wooden box from the secret compartment and took her second identity card and the secret phone. Her brother Farid was still sleeping in the other room, so she left him a written message to not worry and went out.

Arriving at the port, she easily passed the identification devices and headed for the boat her father had given her on her 20th birthday. She called



her "*Rebelde*" because at that time Teresa was still a rebellious teenager. His father taught her everything he knew about sailing and diving from a young age and in time Teresa proved to be able to stay underwater for quite some time. The young woman got on the boat, raised the anchor, started the electricity generator, and activated the control panel. She set her navigation coordinates and descended into the cabin for the diving equipment. She carefully checked the oxygen level in the container, and she made sure once again that all the equipment is in optimal condition for use. She had not dived for more than 3 years, so these checks were necessary. She returned to the deck and sat in front of the navigation panel. The sea looked calm, and no rain was forecast for the next two days so it was time to get out to sea. She still hadn't finished the coffee that she'd bought from the port cafe. She was going to do it, but she was waiting to get a little further from the seacoast. She wanted to be away from the computer for at least 2 days and especially from the Indian man who was already in her soul.

In less than an hour, Teresa was well away from the Mediterranean coast and she was ready to begin her first dive session. She had set out to dive deeper this time. The record set at the last session three years ago was 30 meters. This time she wanted to try at 35 meters. She just hoped there wasn't a problem with the oxygen pump. Before

jumping into the water, she sipped the last drop of coffee from her plastic glass, and she tried to relax a little. She had been working quite a bit on fixing some bugs in the code for the past few days and she was a bit tired. Added to this was Prashant's tough attitude which never seemed to change. There were two scenarios in her mind: either the Indian man really wasn't interested in her as a woman, or he had feelings for her and was too proud to make the first move. Teresa didn't know what to believe or how to approach the situation. There didn't want to consider Alex's assumptions even though the Frenchman was firmly convinced that Prashant loved her. But not her. The young woman needed a lot more than a guess to even take half a step closer to the Indian. She was about to go down into the water when she heard the ring of the phone carefully placed in the inner pocket of his waterproof diving suit. She wanted to ignore it but only one person could call her on this phone and that was Alex Dubois. She pressed the green button and heard the shrill voice of the Frenchman:

- Where are you, Teresa? It's already 10.30 in your place and you should be online.
- I won't be online today and maybe not tomorrow either, answered the young woman calmly.
- Tell me you are still in the "*Network*".

- In fact, I'm not for two hours. I went out in the Mediterranean Sea by boat. I was just getting ready to start a diving session.
- Damn it, Teresa! Alex said indignantly. If Prashant doesn't see you in the "*Network*" he's going crazy this time. You can't be so indifferent to him. This man loves you. I know how worried he was last time when you disappeared on the mountain.
- Listen Alex, I love him too with all my heart and all I want is to be with him forever, but his ignorance hurts me. I don't expect him to cross the ocean or to risk his life for me, but at least he can take half a step. How the hell am I supposed to know how he feels if he doesn't even talk to me? Teresa replied angrily.

She had never opened to Alex like this but now she really needed to. Thinking of Prashant and the way how he treated her most of the time, a tear rolled down her cheek. The young woman was suffering because of him, and Alex knew it. Even though she had never told him anything he knew about her feelings for Prashant, and he really wanted that this relationship to take shape and work. But sometimes even he did not understand the attitude of the Indian. He tried to calm the girl down though:

- Stay calm Teresa. You just must be a little more patient. Don't turn your back on him now. He also needs you to be with him.
- I won't get out of Prashant's life for good, said the girl while wiping the tears from her eyes with one hand. It's just that he's so far away and I need him here.
- I know, girl, you don't have to justify anything. Trust me he wants to be with you too, but he is probably afraid that he will never be able to meet you.

Hearing this the young woman did not know whether to tell him about her plan to flee to India illegally. The line was secure, and she could tell him now, but she didn't have time. However, she added:

- In the shortest possible time, I will go to India, to Prashant. I can't stay here without him. It's like living in a matrix.
- Do you mean to leave Europe? Does this mean you will get your chip implanted?
- No, Alex. We'll talk about that another time. Now I just want to get into the sea water and not think about anything. Just don't say anything to Prashant.
- Nothing? asked the confused Frenchman.
- If he asks you where I am, you can give him this phone number and he can call me himself.

These were the last words of the young woman after which she stopped talking. She really didn't want to think about Prashant at least while she was there under the sea level 30 meters deep. She arranged her suit and helmet, she carefully placed his oxygen tank in the back and properly connected it to the breathing system, and she dived into the water.

Being down there among the seaweed, fish and other marine life was a real delight. She descended deeper and deeper but every time she glanced at the digital altimeter on her wrist. The young woman was not at all afraid of water. Ever since she was a child, her father had taken her with him whenever he went on an expedition at sea. She was his only daughter and he wanted her to become a strong woman. And his wish came true. Teresa Jimenez was a small woman but extremely strong in spirit. Even now, being madly in love with Prashant and unsure of his feelings for her, she still found the strength to fight for her dreams to come true. Many times, she wanted to give up the fight for the heart of the Indian but something in her soul told her to continue that she is on the right path. It was that connection she felt from the first moment when she heard Prashant's voice in the project meeting. She couldn't give him up even if she wanted to, it's just that being away from him made her feel a little overwhelmed. But even so she loved him. If she had a trace of doubt

before she was now certain of her feelings for him. She knew from the beginning that the road to his heart would be a difficult one, but she still chose it. For the first time in her life, she listened to her heart and her heart told her that Prashant is the chosen one.

The young woman checked the altitude once more and she was already 30 meters away. She started going down again but she had to do it carefully and much more slowly. She had never dived deeper and didn't know what awaited her. She checked the oxygen level, and it was still enough. She descended another 5 meters and, maintaining the altitude, she swam among the corals and fish from one side to the other in a radius of 50-60 meters. She didn't want to stray too far from the boat's location. It was a dreamscape and Teresa really liked being there. She felt truly free without the Government drones monitoring her every move. The technology had advanced so much in the past 10 years that the young woman wondered if some teleportation portal had been discovered somewhere. Anything was possible after the "*Big Change*" happened. What bothered her the most was that the Government was manipulating the remaining population. It gave people access to some technologies so they could monitor them more easily, but some discoveries were kept secret. And they said it was for the protection of the people

because most of them were not ready to accept the reality. And the reality totally changes people's perception of life. Many of them still believed that there was only one life and one reality. But the truth was quite different. And Teresa knew it. She knew that according to the string theory, there were a multitude of more or less identical parallel realities and that there were some portals where one could cross from one reality to another, or travel in a split second over great distances but she still had no access in this technology. And she needed it so that she could reach Prashant location more easily. Perhaps it would have been much easier to program a portal to take her to her desired destination than to extract the chip code from her brother's DNA. It was a risky procedure that she was going to do as soon as she will arrive to the apartment. She was afraid that something would happen to Farid during the extraction, but she couldn't let him live like this.

She checked her oxygen level one more time and she decided it was time to head back to the ship. She had consumed more than half of his amount of oxygen, and she didn't want to take any unnecessary risks by descending to a higher altitude. She didn't want anything to happen to her now, at least not before she will be in the Indian's arms. She climbed slowly until she reached the surface of the sea. She was still in the water when she removed her breathing system that covered her mouth and nose.

She looked from side to side and the boat was nowhere within 2 km and the wind was quite strong out there. "*Fuck!*" she told herself. She was nervous that she had strayed too far from the boat and now she had no idea which way to go, and swimming from there to shore would be a pure suicide. She could not understand how the boat had disappeared as there was no other ship around. She must have forgotten to anchor it and the wind-driven water current carried her much farther than she expected. All that was needed was to determine the direction of displacement which would theoretically be to the South-West following the direction of the wind. She couldn't know but she started to swim to the S-W. The young woman just hoped she wasn't wrong this time. If she would remain over the night in the sea swimming and without a life jacket, her chances of survival were minimal. She had to succeed this time too, she was sure her love for Prashant would keep her alive until she reached the boat. Teresa swam almost 3 km to the SW and still there was no sign of the boat. She was tired, and she had almost lost all hope, but she kept swimming. It was the only thing she could do. After swimming another kilometer her little body almost couldn't take it anymore. Her arms, back and whole body ached but she knew she had to find a way to get to the boat. She felt the connection with Prashant extremely strong now. He probably felt that she was going through a difficult time too. She gathered all her strength and she tried

to swim a little more, but her body was ready to give out. The young woman felt like everything was spinning around her and she was sinking. She tried to rise to the surface, but her body no longer responded to any commands. It was as if the brain and body were two separate parts and could no longer synchronize with each other. She sank deeper and deeper, but she was still only aware that she couldn't move. There in the depths of the Mediterranean the young woman opened her eyes and in front of her appeared Prashant who beckoned her to follow him. Teresa surrendered by the water current and somehow she swam in his direction. At this moment she was happy and at peace with herself and her dream of meeting Prashant had come true. At least that's what she thought at the time. At one point the Indian stopped, he turned to her, and gently caught her wrist. Teresa looked at him as if it was the last moment of her life. The man wrapped his arms around her waist and hugged her tightly. That's exactly what she wanted. The young woman couldn't tell if she was still alive or not, but she was nestled in his arms. Then Prashant caught her chin gently with two fingers and kissed her like no one had ever done before. At that moment Teresa felt enveloped in a blue light that scattered beams over a 10-meter radius. Prashant had vanished into thin air, and she was more alive than ever. Before she could make another move, a bright vortex suddenly opened in front of her. She didn't know

what was going to happen, but she stepped into his maelstrom and let events take their course.

At one point Teresa opened her eyes and didn't seem at all surprised to see herself on the deck of her boat. She was happy that she was still alive, but she had no idea how she got there. And the fact that she had met Prashant, that she had been in his arms for a few moments or that he had kissed her was like a nebula in her mind. But that was probably the sign she was expecting from him. Even if she didn't understand everything that had happened one thing was very clear to her: Prashant Desai had saved his life from thousands of kilometers away. She headed for the control panel, she introduced the coordinates of the port of Palma and she set off at high speed for home.

That morning Prashant was more agitated than usual. Normally he was a calm man, but not then. He turned on the computer system and the first thing he did was to check if Teresa was logged into the company chat. When he saw the white login sign to her right, he panicked. He knew that the girl had disappeared once before, and he was hoping with all his heart that she would connect. He wished she was there. And she still wasn't. The man waited another half hour and then checked again. The Indian man

became impatient. He had started the locator application in the "Network", but he was afraid that he would find there. He ran the checking into the application, but he already knew the answer: for the second time Teresa Jimenez could not be in the "Network". He tried to keep his calm, but he could hardly. He knew that she would appear but at this moment he was in an indescribable state of agitation. Although he had never smoked in his life, he now felt the need to do it. He knew that the young woman had run away again because of him but he couldn't get over the fear of expressing his feelings towards her. He had fallen in love with her, with her clear blue eyes and the courage with which she faced any difficulty that came her way. He missed her more and more and he was afraid that he would never meet her. He started the application where the programming environment was running, and he tried to write a few lines of code, but he couldn't focus, and it was bothering him immensely. Kamala was waiting for him to finish the new version of the code so she could test it and he couldn't think about it. Teresa had almost turned his whole life upside down and he still wanted her by his side. Suddenly a new message caught his attention. It was from his colleague, Alex Dubois. *"Hi Prashant! Teresa is alone at sea for diving. You can find her at this number 0034630732767. I don't know what you're up to but make sure that nothing bad happens to her,"* the Frenchman wrote. The man couldn't believe

what it was writing there. To know that the woman he loved was far away it was one thing but to know that she was alone at sea it was already too much. He picked up his phone and without thinking, dialed the number sent by the Frenchman and waited for someone to answer on the other end of the line. He wasn't going to give up until he talked to her to make sure that she was okay. If necessary, he was willing to admit his feelings to her to make her to return. But the phone kept ringing and there was no one to answer. He double checked each digit and called again. He threw his phone somewhere towards the corner of the bed and he started pacing nervously from side to side of the room. He was afraid that something bad had happened to Teresa. He rushed to his brother Manish's room at top speed, and he searched desperately for the pack of cigarettes. He had found it later somewhere in the desk drawer. He took a cigarette, looked around for a lighter and lit it. She had never done it before, but she had seen Manish smoking so many times. He went back to his room, he went out to the balcony and while smoking he called the young woman's number one more time. He was so scared that he was blowing smoke after smoke. After he finished smoking, he returned to the room and sat down in front of the computer. Kamala had sent him several messages, but he didn't even feel like reading them. At least not until he was talking to the woman he loved. At one point the room started spinning with him and he felt like he couldn't

breathe anymore. With difficulty he reached the bed and began to breath very fast. He tried to apply some yoga techniques, but nothing was working now. He felt in his soul that Teresa was in a real danger, and he had not the faintest idea how to help her. In this moment he was breathing harder and harder. Although he was in his room, and he was still conscious he could feel his lungs filling with water and he was about to drown. He wanted to drink a mouthful of water, but he couldn't move anymore. *"No, dammit, I can't die now. At least not until I save Teresa."* the man thought to himself. He didn't know what was happening to him. He sat there motionless waiting to see what would happen next. It was a force beyond him that he could not control it. He saw a bright blue light and he saw Teresa in the water, her body was almost inert. It was more than he could bear. He could feel his arms and back aching, but he still wanted to save her. As if by a miracle he rose from the bed, passed through the beam of light, and he grabbed the girl by the wrist. With all the strength he had left, he took her in his arms and kissed her passionately like he had never done before. He saw that light turn into a vortex and Teresa disappeared into it. And he stood there alone for a few fractions of a second until he was absorbed by the vortex of light that had formed earlier.

After about two hours Prashant woke up in his room more rested than ever. He knew that Teresa

was fine and even though the girl hadn't answered his calls, the connection between them was stronger than ever. Now he didn't need any confirmation, and even if they didn't know each other he knew their love was real.

Teresa finally arrived in front of the building where she lived. Although she had met enough people along the way, and everything seemed unchanged she still had emotions. She feared that the portal through which she had arrived back on the boat might have teleported her to a different reality. She would have managed to live in another dimension of reality, but she wouldn't be able to live without Prashant. Not now when he had taken the first step. She slowly climbed up to the first floor and when she reached to the apartment door, she took two deep breaths, she pressed his finger on the fingerprint reader and the door opened. She entered and with the heart as a flea she headed for Farid's room. She opened the door, and she breathed a sigh of relief. Her brother was there, sipping slowly from a cup of coffee. Without thinking, she said:

- Bro, what year are we in?

Farid turned his eyes in her direction and answered her confusedly:

- In 2040. Why?
- It's all right, after that she took him aside and while he prepared a Masala tea for her, the young woman told him everything that had happened at sea.

Her brother didn't seem surprised at all. He had read a lot in the last 10 years, and he also knew about the existence of those natural portals that were all over the planet. Apparently, his sister had found one of her own. Or rather the portal found her. He hugged her gently and then let her rest. Teresa needed to take a hot shower, leave a message for Prashant, and then sleep. The next day she was going to extract the chip code from her brother's DNA, and she needed to be totally relaxed. After half an hour she got out of the shower cabin, she started the messenger app on her mobile phone and even though she knew that Prashant was already sleeping at this time, she wrote to him: "*Good night, Prashant! I love you.*" After that she turned off the light and fell asleep instantly.

The next day, Teresa woke up around 8:00 a.m., turned on her computer and the company's internal chat so Prashant could see that she was there, and she headed into the next room to prepare the chip code extraction equipment. She was about to leave the room when she heard the signal of a new incoming message on the secure phone. "*Good morning, Teresa! I love you too.*" Prashant had

written to her. The young girl smiled. For the first time in her life, she was truly happy. The Indian loved her, and this gave her the strength to overcome all the obstacles. She left the room, and her brother was waiting for her in the living room. He had a lot of emotions, but he was ready for the extraction. Teresa mounted the sensors properly, she connected him to the vital signs monitor and through an interface she connected him to the computer. In theory she knew the procedure but to test it on her brother for the first time made her feel a little stressed.

- Are you ready bro? Can we start?
- Yes sis. Let her go. Get that damn code out of my body.

Teresa started an application and after running two lines of code, the Farid's DNA code appeared on the screen interspersed with the source code of the chip. Without thinking, the young woman looped three times a programming routine that she had written some time ago based on the code of the chip. She waited with bated breath for the code to finish running while she checked her brother's vital signs. Everything was stable for now. At one point she saw him getting red in the face and breathing harder and harder and she was getting scared. She had minimal medical knowledge and she was not prepared for such situations. She analyzed the code carefully as the routine ran and she noticed some parameters

that should have remained constant, but they were varying between certain limits. She stopped the run for a split second, and she added a conditioning loop to the code to keep those parameters under control. She saved the changes and she resume running the code. This time the parameters had remained unchanged. She glanced at the monitor screen and all of Farid's vital signs were back to normal. She breathed a sigh of relief. She was still carefully watching the code run and everything was under control. There were 15 minutes left and the extraction was complete. She waited for it to finish, and she went to her brother. He was there, lying on the bed, exhausted but still having the energy to smile. He wanted to get up, but the girl stopped him.

- Not yet bro. I'll take another two minutes to verify that the code extraction is complete, and then I'll log you out.

She approached the computer, wrote a line of code and she ran the code. After about 3 minutes the result was positive. The chip code was no longer in her brother's DNA. He was now a free man. She approached him and said with a smile:

- That's it, bro. You are free now.

Farid got up and with all the strength he had left he took Teresa in his arms. That little girl had accomplished what the scientists from all over the world had never even thought to attempt. Now he

was a free man, and he was ready to accompany his sister to India where her love was. Teresa turned her head and glanced at the computer. Prashant was there, online, but no more words were needed between them. Each knew how the other felt.