

THE SECRET

Alex Dubois had just finished writing the last part of the code, he uploaded it to the server, and he shut down the computer. For the past three days he had worked harder than he should have to and now all that he wanted was to rest. He didn't want to hear from anyone or anything. His friend Patrick had been looking for him two hours before, but Alex just wanted to be alone to think about his next move. He knew that Teresa was somehow planning to get to India to Prashant, but he had no idea how she wanted to leave Europe. He knew her well enough to realize that the young woman could put her life in danger to reach to the man she loved. He was afraid for her but somehow that was exactly what Teresa needed right now. He sat down on the bed in the most comfortable position, but he still couldn't fall asleep. He stayed like that for about 10 minutes, and he got up. He went down the two floors and when he reached the front of the building he headed for the garage. Although he hadn't been in there for almost 4 years, in that evening he wanted to go for a ride on the motorcycle left by his father. It was the only object he had kept after his father had died in the flames of the fire that started out from nowhere at the company where he worked. He opened the garage door and as expected everything was full of dust.

Finally, he saw the old motorcycle under a navy-blue tarp. He knew his father kept the keys there in the garage in a metal cabinet drawer. He carefully unlocks the closet door and notices somewhere at the bottom a rather narrow drawer. He opened it and took the keys. He was about to close it when a metal box covered in rust caught his eye. He took it out and he placed it next to the light bulb. Alex didn't know what to expect but he opened the box. There didn't seem to be anything of value there: a beer bottle opener, some old metal coins, a penknife, and a key to a safe deposit box. The man left the box there open; he just took the key; he locked the garage door, and he went back into the apartment. It was more important to unravel the mystery of the key found in the garage. He examined it carefully with a magnifying glass and on its surface at one end was a logo that he recognized. The key belonged to the most important bank in France, BNP Paribas. He had no idea what his father had been up to before he died. They hadn't been very close. His father wanted Alex to become a businessman, but Alex preferred IT area. He wasn't very sociable and the idea of having daily business meetings with people he didn't know scared him a bit. The man put the key in a safe place and planned to stop by the bank the next day to check the safe deposit box.

The next day, a little after 8 o'clock, Alex woke up and after drinking his morning coffee he left in a

hurry for the headquarters of the BNP Paribas bank. In a maximum of 20 minutes, the man was already in front of the bank. He entered and after passing the identification system, he presented himself at the reception. When it was his turn, he took the key out of his pocket and politely said:

- Good morning! I came to get something from the safe.

The receptionist took the key, checked the number written on it into the computer, then she answered:

- Of course, Mr. Dubois. Mr. Savigny will come and lead you to the vault. Please wait on the right side.

Alex headed to the indicated spot and after a few moments, a massive man with a balding head arrived. He beckoned him to follow him and invited him into the room where the safe that belonged to his father was.

- Please give me your key, the man told him. Our unlocking system is based on two keys, one that is in the possession of the customer and the other that remains in the possession of the bank.

He gave the key to the man, and he waited for the agent to open the safe where the safe deposit box was. The door opened and the agent handed

him the box and left the room. Alex lifted the lid, and he was speechless. Inside the metal box was a birth certificate printed on old, yellowed paper. The man took it, and he analyzed with attention. It seemed that the certificate belonged to a Juan Pablo Perez, born the same year as him somewhere in Palma de Mallorca. "*What the hell!*" Alex thought to himself then put the document in his wallet and hurried out of the bank building.

Farid was relaxing on a sun lounge enjoying the morning sun on the beach in Magaluf. It was one of the most beautiful beaches in Palma and now that he could no longer be monitored by the Government, he could spend a day with his sister. They were soon to leave for India and the plan was not yet settled. The Egyptian didn't want Teresa to suffer anything bad, but he also couldn't bear to see her suffer because she is away from Prashant. His sister was still in the water when he lit a cigarette. It was a habit he couldn't get rid of, but he didn't want to smoke around the young woman either. He knew that she also smoked sometimes when she was stressed, and he didn't want that she become like him. In less than 5 minutes Teresa was back on the lounge. She loved to swim, she could stay in the sea all day long

but now they had plans to make and she wanted to get to India as soon as possible.

- Do you want a juice or a coffee? her brother asked her.
- A lemonade maybe.
- I'll go get it and come back.

In a few moments Farid returned with two glasses of ice-cold lemonade. The young woman took one of them and sipped slowly. She knew that their plan wasn't perfect, so she had a backup plan. This one was just as risky, but she wanted to talk to her brother about this new one.

- Brother, we must decide how we will reach Prashant, said the young woman.
- Well, you said that we were leaving on the plane that guy bought you. But will you be the pilot?
- Somewhat. It will mostly be on autopilot, I'm just supervising. The problem is different now.
- Which? Farid asked raising an eyebrow.
- After we will parachute, we will be on our own. No GPS, just my old compass and that old secure line phone. We must walk from the skydiving site to Pune. And I haven't the faintest idea how we do it.
- Yes, we must think, said the man and after a few seconds of thought he added:

- Can't you call Prashant after we are in India in a safe place?
- No, brother. If I do that he would come after us and I could put him in danger. We will be like ghosts there. We'll have fake ID cards, but we won't have implanted chips. If the government gorillas see us, they will catch us.
- But not everyone has chips in India. Why would they catch only us?
- Because having white skin we have a target on our forehead. We stand out bro. I must find a way to fix this.

Unfortunately, Teresa was right. There in India, no matter where they would be they will always have a target on their head. And Prashant would always be in danger around them, and that was exactly what his sister wanted to avoid. She loved Prashant more than herself and he knew that she was able of giving her life for the Indian. He was sad that he couldn't help her with anything. And he was even sadder to see her suffering.

- Farid, there is another plan B that I haven't told you about yet, added the young woman.
- A plan B? I listen to you, said the Egyptian with a smile at the corner of his mouth.
- We can go by sea to the coordinates where I was last time, and we look for the portal. That way we will reach India without being

captured by the Nepalese or the Indian guards.

- No way Teresa said her brother agitated. How the hell are you going to program a portal to take us to the desired destination and in the desired dimension?
- That portal is natural brother, it cannot be programmed by humans. But when it brought Prashant to my location to save my life it worked. It was no mere coincidence. Prashant and I, we have a strong connection beyond what the human mind can comprehend. The portal is activated at our thoughts.

Farid couldn't believe what his sister had planned. If plan A had a risky side, plan B was even riskier. One mistake and they could end up in another dimension of reality or they could each end up in a different reality.

- Sis, what you want to do is dangerous, the man finally said.
- I won't fail, brother. We go to that place and if I think intensely about Prashant, the portal will open and then we enter the vortex.
- Ok, let's say you're right. There is a strong connection between you and the Indian and the portal will teleport you to him, but if it teleports me to another dimension different than yours?

Her brother's words had made Teresa think. She knew he was right. In the vortex things happened very differently. There was no guarantee that the portal would take them to the same place, or even that it would take her to Prashant.

- We'll think about what we'll do brother. I know that the plan B is much more dangerous but all I want is to get to him. I love Prashant.
- I know that sister. We will find a logical solution, don't worry, he said to encourage her.

In the moment when the two brothers were trying to figure out which plan was better, Teresa heard the secret phone ringing. She glanced at the phone screen, and it was Alex. As it was still early in the morning, there were not many people on the beach, so she put on his wide-brimmed straw hat, and she answered:

- Yes Alex, say quickly please. I'm at the beach and if I'm caught with this phone, I will be in trouble.
- Ok Teresa. I've run into a problem, said the French curtly.
- A bug in the code?
- No, it's not about work. I found a guy's old birth certificate in my dad's safe.
- Wow exclaimed the young woman. And did you find out who the guy is?

- No, but the document is registered at your side in Palma.
- Send me the scanned document and I'll check here, said the young woman.
- I was thinking of coming there myself. I have a few days off and, on this occasion, we can see each other in reality.
- Send me the details and I will come with Farid to pick you up from the airport.
- All right, says Alex, after which he quickly hung up. He knew the young woman would be in serious trouble if she was caught with that phone and he wanted to avoid that.

While Teresa carefully hid the phone, her brother watched her curiously. He knew that she had talked to Alex, but he couldn't figure out what it had been about.

- Alex will come to Palma, said the young woman finally.
- Interesting! So, the team is getting bigger, only Prashant is left to come.
- He doesn't have to, said Teresa. I'm going to him, even if it's the last thing I do. But first let's solve Alex's problem.
- Problem?
- He found in his dead father's safe a birth certificate of a guy who was registered here on the island.

Farid really didn't understand from where she had such inner strength. She had planned everything to get to the man she loved even though she knew that every day she spent in India would be in a real danger and that once out of Europe she would be a fugitive for the rest of her life. She will have to hide day by day, to disguise herself so as not to be recognized by the Government and to live as a ghost. He hoped with all his heart that Prashant Desai would be worth all this sacrifice.

Prashant finally reached in front of his house. He had ridden the motorcycle for hours on the busy streets of Pune. He wanted to be away from the computer for a while, to be alone with his thoughts. He was missing Teresa more and more and it was driving him crazy. He had her in his arms for a moment and then the vortex made her disappear. He wanted her to stay there with him forever, but he didn't know how to go about her. Being from zone III, the Government would never have allowed him to reach zone II even with chip implantation. The rules were very strict about this. Only those from the upper areas had the privilege of moving to lower areas but not vice versa. Before the "*Big Change*" it was much easier, but after the "*Arians*" came to power, the movements of those from Asia and Africa were

blocked. These groupings found all over the globe aimed to preserve a pure race, and even those in Zones I and II who were married to people of inferior races were caught and deported. Prashant knew that those who were part of the Government were idiots manipulated by "*Arians*". And the "*Arians*" had never been seen by anyone. They were like ghosts. He knew that Teresa was of a race considered superior, but he loved her for her wonderful soul. She was totally different from all the Europeans she had interacted with so far. She treated him with respect and regarded him as her equal. He wanted so badly that she be there with him and he knew that the young woman would find a way to come to India. If he had doubts until the vortex experience now, he was certain that Teresa Jimenez loved him, and she wouldn't leave him there alone.

He left his motorcycle somewhere in the yard and when he was about to enter in the house, Manish just opened the door. He was with his son Ajay. He looked at him smiling. He could see on his face that he was happy. He had a wife who loved him and two wonderful children. And he was alone and far from the woman he truly loved.

- What are you thinking, bro? Manish asked him curiously. He saw him thoughtful, and his soul ached.

- It doesn't matter. Now I am here with you, and I should be happy for that, Prashant replied with sadness in his voice.
- But I feel that you are not happy. Is it also about your colleague from Spain?
- Somewhat.
- Why the hell don't you tell him how you feel? his brother asked.
- She already knows. She loves me too Manish, only she is far away. How the hell do I get to zone II?
- It is complicated but not impossible.
- You mean what? Prashant asked with a hint of hope.
- You can get out if you know the right person. But it is risky.
- Risky? I'd rather die trying to reach her than live without any hope of ever seeing her.
- It's not easy bro. Are you sure this is what you want?
- Hell yeah! Prashant said trying to convince his brother to help him somehow.
- I will help you. It's the best I can do. I can't bear to see you walking around like a zombie. You love this young woman very much and love has no cure.
- Thank you, Manish, he said with a faint smile in the corner of his mouth and then went up to his room.

Talking to Manish was the best thing that happened after meeting Teresa. The thought of meeting her again made him the happiest man on the planet. Once in the room he turned on his computer, and Teresa was there online. I want to write her there in the application, but he gave up for the moment. He wanted to call her at least to hear her voice for a few moments but he still didn't. He sat there in front of the computer for a while looking at the young woman's picture. Those clear, blue eyes and the innocent child look had conquered him from the first moment. He thought of their first kiss, there in the depths of the Mediterranean Sea, and he wanted to kiss her again, for a thousand times. He wanted to hug her and caress her small and delicate body with slow movements. He wanted her so badly that he felt a wave of fire throughout his body. At that moment he smiled because he knew that Teresa wanted the same thing. He could hear her thoughts, feel her emotions and that gave him hope to fight no matter how hard it was.

It was already 4 PM when Alex's flight landed at Palma airport. He went through the identification system, through the rigorous checks and finally he arrived at the parking lot near the airport. He glanced around and less than 500 meters away, a small

blonde woman had opened the door of a black Audi. The young woman looked up and motioned for him to come towards her. Alex took his bags and approached to her. He couldn't believe she was Teresa. Finally, the man broke the silence:

- Hello Teresa! I'm Alex Dubois.
- Hi Alex! I recognized you from your profile picture.
- And what do you think? Do I look prettier or uglier than in that picture? the Frenchman asked, trying to sound funny.
- Only more mature, answered the young woman smiling, after which she added:
- Welcome to the island!

Teresa motioned for him to get into the car and set off at top speed towards the Arenal neighborhood where the building where she lived was located. Alex looked delighted at the scenery that unfolded on either side of the trail. Seeing palm trees on either side of the street was something he had always dreamt. Although he had lived in France since he was born, he always had the feeling that he did not belong there. There was nothing there that looked familiar. But here on the island everything was different. He turned his gaze to Teresa. She was so beautiful. And she had amazing blue eyes. But she was Prashant's woman.

- That's it. We have arrived, he finally heard the girl's voice.

Alex opened the door and got out. He followed Teresa to the front door of the apartment. Without thinking, the young woman pressed her finger on the fingerprint reader and the door opened. Farid was there, somewhere in the kitchen making coffee and preparing "*Tikka Masala chicken*" for everyone. Alex turned his gaze to the massive man in front of him and felt somewhat intimidated.

- Alex, he is my Egyptian brother Farid, said Teresa.

The Frenchman held out his hand to him and he tried to be as polite as possible:

- I'm Alex Dubois.
- Delighted, Alex, the Egyptian told him, taking his hand in a strong grip.
- God, Alex, don't be so scared, said the girl laughing out loud. He may look like a Pit Bull but he's tamer than a mouse.
- I must take your word for it, said the Frenchman as he began to feel more and more relaxed.
- Show me that certificate, said the young woman.

Alex took out the neatly folded document in a secret pocket of the wallet. The young woman

glanced at him and tried to piece things together. She didn't understand more than her colleague but at least she had planned something.

- Tomorrow morning, we are going to the Registry in the city center to see what we find in the Archive.
- Do you think they'll let us in? Farid asked as he lit a cigarette.
- They won't let us all. I'll just go in and dig. You two stay in the car. Do you agree?

The two men agreed after which all three began to tell stories as if they had known each other for a lifetime. Alex felt good in their company. Even though the experience with the blue light that had happened some time ago on Patrick's ship still seemed strange to him, he decided to share it with the two brothers as well. Hearing this, Teresa did not seem very surprised. And as with her, Nice's sea portal activated when the two were out at sea and presumably in danger. The young woman showed a smile at the corner of her mouth and said:

- Alex, that blue light was a portal. You and your friend were at sea, and perhaps danger was lurking.
- A what? The Frenchman asked, puzzled.
- A vortex. That is, a natural teleportation device.

Hearing them, Alex was more and more surprised. He didn't know what to believe anymore. At this moment he felt like he was living in a sci-fi movie.

- Alex, what was happening at sea when you saw the blue light?
- I don't understand where you want to beat sister, said Farid.
- It was a quiet night; the sky was clear when we went to sea but suddenly a wind started. But I certainly remember there was no storm, answered the Frenchman, trying his best not to bite his nails.
- Guys, there is a pattern here. And in my case, it was the same. The sky was clear, the sea was calm and suddenly the wind started to blow and took my boat very far. I was in danger to lose my life and then the portal was activated.

The Frenchman looked more and more amazed at the two brothers. While Farid took the coffees outside to the terrace, the young woman took Alex aside and told him the whole experience including the part where Prashant went through the vortex and saved her life. Hearing all this Alex began to shake with emotion. It was too much adrenaline for one day. Teresa prepared his room and let him rest. Everyone needed a good sleep because next day will be a complicated one. Before falling asleep, the

Teresa took out her secret phone, wrote a short message, "*I love you and I want to be with you. Good night, Prashant!*" and she sent it to the Indian.

The next day Teresa was already on her feet when Alex opened her eyes. She set about making breakfast, and while her brother was making the coffee, she heard a new message come in on the secret phone that she always kept with her. "*Good morning, Teresa! I love you so much and miss you and our kiss so much.*", the young woman read the message from Prashant with a smile. The Indian knew that even if Teresa wasn't always online in the company's internal chat, she was out there somewhere always thinking about him.

Two hours later the three were in front of the building where the Registry for newborns was located. Given that the certificate was dated more than 30 years ago, neither of them was holding out much hope. But it was worth a try. The young woman opened the door, she climbed the few steps, and she entered the building. There was a middle-aged lady at the reception. With the certificate in hand, the young woman approaches her and addresses her respectfully:

- Good morning!
- How can I help you? the lady asked in a kind voice.

- I have a birth certificate, dated 32 years ago. My friend found it in an old box that belonged to his father. We would like to know who the owner of this document is.

The lady at the reception looked her over, asked for the document and said:

- Let's hope there is some record in the archive. Otherwise, I don't know what I could do. Wait a moment for me to check.

Teresa sat down somewhere further on a bench and waited for the receptionist to give her news. Finally, the lady called her and handed her a freshly printed sheet of paper.

- Go to room 206, to the Archives. It seems that the information you are looking for has been classically archived in a folder.

The young woman thanked her nicely and she headed for room 206. There an older woman was waiting for her, and she handed her a thick file with yellowed edges. Teresa sat down in a chair at a weathered wooden desk, and she began to examine it sheet by sheet. She had gone through more than half the file and was giving up hope that she would find anything else there. She wanted to leave, but somewhere towards the end of the file she saw a piece of paper sticking out more than the rest. She pulled her out of there and she was speechless.

According to the records in the Archive, the request for the birth certificate was submitted many years ago by Teresa's mother. "*Dammit! It means that Alex is my brother.*", the girl said to herself indignantly, after which she took a photo of all the information she had found, and she hurried out. She didn't mind that Alex was her blood brother, but it hurt that her parents had lied to her all her life. And now there was no one left who could give them an explanation. The girl left the building and reached the parking lot. The two men were waiting for her there with bated breath. Teresa couldn't find the words to explain everything she had found out, so she showed them the picture on her phone. Alex couldn't believe what was written there. He was furious and rightly so. His parents, the only ones he knew lied to him from the start. He may never know the truth, but one thing he knew for sure: Teresa Jimenez was his sister. Farid looked at the two and said with a smile:

- Now we are 3 brothers, and it seems that all 3 of us will go to India.

The girl smiled and opened the car door and together with the two brothers sped off straight to Arenal.

Arriving in her room, Teresa wanted to call Prashant, to tell him everything but she didn't know how to do it. Now there were three brothers and three elements of nature and if they joined forces

nothing could stand in their way. Teresa was like AIR, always cheerful and optimistic and always on the move, Farid was like FIRE, full of life, impulsive and a born fighter and Alex was like WATER, gentle and dreamy. Only Prashant was missing, a calm and very patient guy, just like the EARTH. The young woman knew for sure that fate brought them all together with a reason. There were forces far above them and their destiny was a great one. Teresa glanced at the computer out of the corner of her eye. Prashant was there online. She knew that he could hear her every thought, and feel her every emotion, and he could feel how much she wanted him at that moment. Thinking of their first kiss from the bottom of the sea, the young woman wanted so much more. At that moment she felt an immense heat around her and her body began to vibrate. She wasn't scared at all, on the contrary she was enjoying all that she was feeling because she knew that the connection between her and Prashant was at a much higher level now, and no one could understand it no matter how much they wanted to.