



# *TRAPPED*

Volume 1



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## TERESA

For the first time in her life Teresa was feeling sad and abandoned and she has no idea how she could handle this situation by her own. Everything that had happened in the last few years had left a rather strong mark on her soul. The young woman needed at least one reason to smile again, to fight, but she still hadn't been able to find it. Everyone she once had by her side, was now somewhere thousands of miles away or already dead and she left alone desperately searching for the light at the end of the tunnel. And most of all she was afraid that it would never be like before.

Right now, it was just her alone surrounded by all the amazing technology that people once only saw in sci-fi movies. In these days everything was real but all the artificial intelligence that had appeared all over the world could not and would never replace a human soul. And what pained her most was the fact that the people had embraced this change with enthusiasm even though the transition had been overwhelming for many of them. It was sad to see how people from all countries of the world were losing their jobs one by one and living only by the mercy of governments, those who were still

working were the programmers and software developers. The government still needed them for artificial intelligence programming that was quite extensive even in less developed states.

Thinking about everything that had happened in the last few months, Teresa, even though she felt a terrible knot in her stomach, she got up from the sofa, she took out a cigarette from an almost started pack and she went out on the terrace. She lit it and drew a very slow smoke. She tried to not think about anything, but Prashant's face kept coming back to her mind every time she tried to do this. Then a tear gently rolled down on her cheek. She could feel his neck muscles tensing more and more and a suffocating heat started to consume her whole body from the inside, but it didn't matter anymore. She continued to smoke as if it was the only thing that mattered now. She felt a strong pain in her soul and it made that all the physical pains to disappear, but Prashant's face was still there and all what she felt for him was stronger than ever.

She finally returned to the room and sat down gently on the swivel chair in front of the desk where she was working on her daily tasks. She was software developer at one of the most important companies in the world. Unlike some of her colleagues, at the time of the "*Great Change*" was produced, she had managed to keep her job. She wasn't paid exceptionally well but she had a somewhat decent living. She had a laptop, two monitors, a pair of LED speakers and that was her

world. It was just her, the computer and colleagues located in every corner of the world, most of them from India. She wasn't very close to all of them, they were too different, and she hadn't been able to make a connection with them yet. The only one who was somewhat close to her was Alexander Dubois, a short French young man with brown hair and round eyes. He was a decent man and he respected her because even though she was a woman she had endured for so many years in the IT industry which was largely male dominated. It had not been easy for her, but she did not accept to give up, especially in front of men. Software application development was one of her passions, and whenever she completed a task successfully, it gave her a sense of accomplishment.

Teresa Jimenez was a woman past 30 but still beautiful. Although her grandparents came from Russia, she was born in Spain, but for several years she had settled on one of the islands near Spain, in Palma de Mallorca. She was no more than 1.60 meters tall; she was blonde with shoulder-length hair, and she had very beautiful blue eyes. She used to practice martial arts and yoga daily and with a lot of patience and hard fighting, the young woman had reached a level that most practitioners aspired to. Although she no longer participated in competitions, the energy balance that she had accumulated for 10 years had helped her go through the “*Great Change*” more easily than the others. It was hard for her to accept everything that had happened, but she had managed to keep relatively calm. She was trying to

deal calmly with all the change that humanity was going through in that moment, but she felt how the loneliness destroy her little by little every day. It was hard and she really wanted to interact with a real person, she wanted to see smiles on people's faces, but this hardly ever seemed to happen anymore. As things currently stood, the humans seemed to be on the way of extinction. Maybe those who had survived after the "*Great Change*" event, were the last specimens left alive.

Teresa and Alex chatted daily even though they didn't know each other in reality. They worked together day by day, but they also shared the same ideas about the globally implementing of digitization and the distribution of the integrated chips to the rest of the population. Although they both worked in the digital field, they were categorically against these regulations. Since the printed banknotes had been abandoned in all over the world, most of the people had accepted payments and transactions in cryptocurrencies, but there was also a large part of the population that had accepted body-integrated chips to make payments and move more easily from a continent to another. Without those integrated chips, it was possible to travel outside, but it needed special permits issued by the government. Both Teresa and Alex knew that they could easily get those permits, but they were aware that the authorities would be watching their every move.

Besides, Alex was not the only developer who worked with in the project launched by the German

company “*InTech Solutions*”. Along with them, other two colleagues from India were also involved: Kamala and Prashant.

Kamala was a beautiful, smart girl with ebony black hair and black eyes. She didn't look more than 27 years old. Although she didn't know her, Teresa could feel that she was friendly and she tried to help everyone in her available time. But both had different interests and she couldn't establish a connection with her colleague.

The last of the colleagues from India, and the most enigmatic was Prashant. He was a relatively distant, mysterious man, but also, he had a special charm. Since she had started the project with the German company, Teresa felt very strong emotions every time when she was going to connect with the Indian man.

The young woman started the application in which she was going to test the code and before running the last tests, she changes three code lines. She wanted to see if she could get some enhanced reports. It was important to the client who had hired her to see the test results in as much detail as possible and her role, as well as Alex's, was to deliver the results reports as consistently as possible. Their colleagues from India also worked side by side, but they were less communicative than she expected. Considering the emotions that Prashant produced to her, Teresa had tried to get close to him at first, but this was not possible.

Alexander supported her as much as he could but one day she was about to give up. She wasn't going to run after the appreciation of a man who would never be able to accept that a woman could be as intelligent as he was. "*Teresa, don't give up yet,*" Alex told her so many times. "*Be patient and finally you will see that Prashant will appreciate your work,*" added the man. But Teresa didn't want to try anymore. Although Prashant had a warm and pleasant voice, the young woman felt him distant with her every time they had a project meeting. She was tired of his cold attitude. With every task she received from him, Teresa proved to him every time that she could solve it professionally and delivered it even before the deadline, but the man was not able to appreciate her. It seemed like her intelligence bothered him somewhat. Sometimes she even had the impression that he appreciated Alex much more even though they worked in the same mode. Teresa tried many times to understand Prashant's way of thinking. Perhaps that being an Indian he was not used to interact with a woman like European people do. Teresa understood that, and she had never asked him to flaunt her in front of her superiors, but she wanted only to trust her as a professional. But Prashant was not ready to do it yet. Maybe one day he will accept her but not now.

Teresa ran the first part of the code and the script worked for the first time without any error. She archived the code, she uploaded it to the server to be tested by Alex, Kamala and Prashant and she started working on the second part of the code. But

before that she wrote a message to Alex on the company's internal chat: *"Alex, please download the code and test it at your end. It runs without errors for me. But before, please run in commander the script **mvn dependency:tree DVerbose = true.**"*

She had barely sent the message to Alex when she realized she had forgotten to include Prashant in the conversation. She opened the chat window with the thought of sending him the message but at that moment Kamala typed her a short message *"Hi Teresa! Have you time for a short conversation?"*. The young woman accepted the conversation, but she was little bit confused. Usually, Kamala didn't use to communicate with her. She used to do this even if it was necessary or if Prashant wanted to know something work related. The Indian man never asked her directly what he wanted to know, he used to send messages through Alex or Kamala. And this was exhausting for the young woman. She needed to hear his voice, and even if Prashant was at the other end of the world, she wanted to know that he was there for her. Many times, she typed him some work-related messages, but the Indian man didn't want to answer her, or he answered only short and distant as *"OK"* or *"It's fine..."*.

In the last moment, Teresa decided to start a conversation with her colleague, Kamala. She typed in the chat window *"Hi Kamala! I'm available now. Call me"*. After a few seconds she heard in the loudspeaker the Kamala's voice:



- Hi Teresa! How are you? Am I disturbing you?
- Hi! Not really. I just finished the code for the first scenario. I wanted to start with the second one.
- That's great, reacted Kamala. I discussed earlier with Prashant, and he wanted to know if you need some help.
- Help from him? asked the young woman even though she was very surprised.
- No, I can help you if you face some issues in the code, said her colleague shortly.
- Thanks Kamala but it's not necessary. The first part of the code is already on the server. You can clone it and test it, answered Teresa with a trace of sadness in her voice.

She was expecting to work for the first time with Prashant, but the Indian man was too proud to do this. Teresa would have wanted to know more about Prashant, about his life but everything related to him was in a mysterious cloud. She realized that she really had no idea who is he and why he is keeping her to distance from him. She wanted to put a lot of questions to Kamala regarding Prashant, but she had not enough courage for the moment. Maybe it was better to use Alex for this. He was a man, and it was easier for him to connect with the Indian.

- It's everything ok? heard the young woman the Kamala's voice. You look very quiet today.
- It's fine, Kamala. I was just thinking at something, reacted she quickly. She doesn't

want that Kamala to find out about her feelings for Prashant.

- In this case, if you need my help, please ping me on the chat window.
- Sure, Kamala, said Teresa and after a few moments added:
- I will update the status here after I will finish with code for the second scenario.
- Ok, thank you. Bye! she added and then pressed the red button to signal that the call was over.

After the call ended, the young woman while quickly preparing some food was thinking about what she was going to do. She had really gotten almost everything she wanted: money, a job she really liked, all that she wanted now was the appreciation of Prashant. What more could she want? But she had no idea that this was just the beginning.

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Prashant had finished his work schedule half an hour ago. It was the 8 hours standard imposed by the government all over the world. But he wanted to stay a while longer. At least until Teresa will be disconnected. Although he knew that the young woman was able to write the code for the second script on her own, Prashant wanted to be there for her, even if he was connected in invisible mode.

He didn't love her, he didn't even know her, but there was something about her that attracted him in

a mysterious way. He would have wanted to meet her, but this was not possible for the moment. Although he knew that her and Alex's friendship was only platonic, he was still envious of the French young man. Alex was in daily contact with Teresa, and he communicated very easily with her what was relatively difficult for the Indian man. Teresa eclipsed him and he simply felt lost himself in her presence.

Prashant was the eldest son of the Rathore family, who was coming from the Indian city of Nagpur. His parents were traditional, not very rich, but they tried to offer to their both children a good education based on their culture and traditions. He was a man neither too short nor too tall, somewhat handsome but he was far from a photo model. He had spent both his high school and college years studying every possible programming language, teaching himself to create various applications. Prashant was passionate about programming, he liked coding and he had no desire to practice sport or chase after girls. His brother tried many times to take him to different trips with bicycle near the city but without success. The young man was not interested in such things. He didn't drink alcohol; he didn't smoke and for about two years he had also given up to drink coffee. When he wasn't coding, he practiced yoga and meditation and after years of practice he had learned to balance his own energy in each chakra. Teresa was also passionate about yoga, but she still had years to reach Prashant's level. The connection between the two was quite intense both intellectually and chemical level and the

man was feeling that all the time it was an intense psychological game between them. Prashant had the feeling that Teresa felt something for him but sometimes she sent him different signals that it confused him. He wanted many times to type to the Spanish woman, but he didn't know how to approach her. It was enough difficult for him to make this step. It was easier to ask Kamala to speak with her, but he knew that he couldn't do this forever. One day he had to face his fears, his demons and to contact her directly.

The man quickly made himself a Masala tea and he began working on the presentation for the project meeting with his German manager, Oliver Weimer. If the government had already accepted the start of the "*Matrix2Alpha*" project, Oliver had to agree to the transfer of all classified information to his colleague, Teresa Jimenez. Prashant had in plan to work with Teresa for a new project but the thought of being connected with her every day made him feel uncomfortable. He knew that she was a very open-minded person, but he still had some problems when he had to speak with her. Teresa had captivated him in a way that even he didn't understand yet. He was afraid to reveal his feelings for her to his office colleagues but Alex even though he was thousands of kilometers away had realized that. He could hear the emotion in his voice every time when Teresa spoke in meetings and the way how he defended her every time in front of Oliver and the company board betrayed his true feelings. Even Teresa felt this, but she was always upset by his cold and cutting

attitude. But Prashant wasn't harsh, it was only his way of hiding his true emotions. As he sipped the last drop of tea from his glass, he ran the code that Teresa uploaded to the server one more time. It was fully functional, but he was in no way surprised. He carefully extracted the reports one by one and attached them to the presentation that he would give the next day in front of the client. It was just a preliminary meeting, there was still work to be done before the application was finished. But the man counted on the help of all his colleagues to deliver the project on the deadline set with those from "*MKT Systems*".

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It was almost 1:00 AM when Alexander arrived in front of the building where he had lived for more than 10 years. He had been on a little overnight getaway to the sea on his childhood friend Patrick' yacht. It was still summer in Nice, and he needed to recharge his batteries. The project he was working on with the team of programmers from India had consumed every drop of his energy. Even though it seemed easy to write code for hours it was not at all. He did not understand how Teresa managed to cope with all the tasks within the project and she still had enough energy to practice sports. The project was hard, the client was difficult and on top of that he had

some minor health problems. Teresa knew this and she tried to help him as much as possible even if it meant working a little bit more. That didn't matter to her. She had enough energy and if Alex felt good, she was feeling good too.

The relationship between Alex and Teresa was strong but somewhat incomprehensible to many people. Even though he didn't know her, he felt attached to the young woman in a quite inexplicable way. He liked to communicate with her, he felt at ease, but whenever he looked at her through the webcam, he saw her as a younger sister. He wanted to protect her from all those who wanted to harm her, but he knew that she didn't need protection from anyone. Teresa was protected by an energy that no one would be able to interact with. At least that's how he felt.

As he climbed the stairs that led to the 2nd floor where his apartment was located, Patrick followed him with firm steps. It was Saturday night so they could even spend the whole night without having any implications on the work they were doing. Alex could ask to Patrick to leave but he didn't want to. He felt good in his company and although he had known him since childhood, he felt that now it was something different. Knowing him since a lifetime he started to consider him like a brother. The way they looked at each other and interacted whenever they had the chance to see each other was no longer the

same. For a long time, he thought that the fact that they had matured was to blame, but it was not only that. In childhood, everything was simple, they played together, they did their homework together and later as teenagers they would hit all the bars at night and during the day they would sleep lying in the sun on Patrick's parents' yacht.

Until recently everything had been somewhat normal, but one night, after they had had a drink or two more than they should have instead of going to his apartment, Alex stayed the night on the yacht. He was too groggy to drive anymore, and his friend wasn't in any better shape either. It was a clear summer night, and they were sitting on the deck watching the sea waves in all their beauty. Alex looked lost in the whey hoping that the next day would feel better. At one point Patrick spotted a strange blue light in the distance between the calm waves of the sea. The man stared at that point for a few seconds and had the feeling that the light was approaching them at an unimaginable speed. Filled with a thrill of fear, he shouted to his friend "*Alex, look over there! We must get out of here*". The other man didn't understand for a moment what it was about but turned his look to the direction that Patrick indicated and was speechless. He could feel his heart beating faster and faster almost out of his chest. He no longer knew where he was and why all this was happening. He reached out and gently

grabbed Patrick' arm. Suddenly, the blue light became more and more intense, and Alex had the feeling that something strange will happen. He was not able to move anymore. He was standing frozen on the deck looking fixedly in the direction from which the beam of light was approaching. Alex just heard the Patrick's voice somewhere around, but he knew that in that moment nobody can do anything. The blue light beam had reached its most intense level and seemed to come from somewhere in the sky. It was a surreal scenery and Alex was still there letting himself be completely enveloped in a blue aura.

A few hours later, Alexander opened his eyes and stared wildly around him. He was alone, lying on the hot sand under the burning sun. He had no idea what had happened during the night, let alone how he had ended up on the beach.



## SÓLLER

It was still early when Teresa heard the phone alarm as in a dream. She should have stopped it from the first moment, but she let it ring a few more times to make sure that she didn't fall asleep again. It was a sunny summer morning and the young woman had decided to take a little trip to her favorite meditation place, *Sóller*. She knew that she wouldn't be able to hide there forever, but she needed to stay disconnected from the Network and especially from the company's internal chat for at least a day. She got out of bed, she put in a hurry a T-shirt and some hiking pants, and while she was preparing her coffee, she took a light breakfast. She wasn't hungry yet, but she needed enough energy to get to her destination. She carefully pulled out a floor tile and she extracted an old wooden box containing various items that the Government must not have known that she was keeping them. She pulled out a very old model phone, a classic compass, and another ID card. If she still wanted to disappear from the landscape one day, she would do it according to her own rules. She inserted a new Sim-card into the old

phone and after a few commands written in backup, she was ready to go.

Due to its location in the *Tramuntana* mountains, *Sóller* was an ideal starting point for hiking and mountain biking. Four mountains with a height of over 1,000 meters formed the background of the "*Valley of Gold*". There were several mountain villages, the best-known being Bunyola and Deja. In fact, the most famous hiking route on the island, *GR 221*, passed through the municipality of *Sóller*. The main attraction in the "*Golden Valley*" was the *Sóller* Train. The narrow-gauge railway connected the capital of the Palma de Mallorca Island with the small town of *Sóller*. The route consisted of 13 tunnels and the spectacular *Cinc-Ponts* viaduct.

In about 15 minutes Teresa was in the center of Palma, in *Plaza d'Espanya*, where the boarding gate for the train to *Sóller* was located. She had some emotions because she had not used that ID card for a long time, and she was afraid that it might not be validated by the Government people. After easily passing the first check for access to the station, the young woman waited for several minutes in line for access validation in the old, wooden train that led to the mountain village. When she got to the validation machine, she felt beads of sweat covering her forehead hidden under her green denim sport cap. She carefully inserted the ID card into the validator and after a few seconds the green LED lit

up as a sign that the access was allowed. She breathed a sigh of relief as she withdrew the card from the machine, and she boarded the train. She sat somewhere in the back of the wagon in a more secluded place, and she covered her face as much as she could with the hood of her sweatshirt. She didn't want to be recognized by absolutely anyone. It was an hour's train ride to *Sóller* railway station. Then she would cross the mountains on the GR 221 route and descend to the port of *Sóller*. Although she knew she would have no access to the Network, the young woman was not afraid. She just wanted to be alone for a while. Just her and her thoughts. She sat there in the train's wagon with her face pressed against the window, eagerly waiting for the train to speed through the 13 tunnels. She couldn't stand being locked up anymore. She felt herself getting less and less air and after taking a small sip of water, she tried to control her breathing. She closed her eyes for a split second and her mind drifted to Prashant. Even though the Indian man was somewhere far away, Teresa felt the connection with him stronger than ever. Here and now, she was only thinking about him, and no matter how much she wanted to, she couldn't get him out of her mind. He was like a magnet that drew her stronger and stronger to him. She could feel her heartbeat getting stronger. She tried to fight back but she didn't have enough energy yet. She gave in to her emotions for a few moments. She knew that Prashant was there

even if she wanted to push him away. The young woman was afraid of her own emotions, but she needed him. Teresa had a strong personality; she also had a rebel spirit, and she was willing to even lose her life fighting against the Government. Prashant knew this and although he was not willing to make a move for the moment, he still promised himself to always be by her side.

In less than 10 minutes the train would stop at the station in *Sóller* village. Teresa took another sip of water; she carefully placed her backpack on her back and prepared for the descent. The thought that she would spend a day in the heat of the sun, among the rocks, olive, almond, lemon, and orange trees, made her feel more peaceful. She got off the train and after easily passing the access gate at the station exit, she headed for the nearest taxi. She validated her ID card once more and in less than 15 minutes she was at the foot of the mountains near the GR 221 route. There, in the heart of the mountains away from the urban agglomeration, she felt safe. Just her, without any kind of connection to the Network and away from the drones that flew over the island every quarter of an hour.

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Prashant woke up that morning earlier than usual. Considering there was a time zone difference

between his location and Teresa's, he knew there was no way for the young woman to be connected that quickly. He said his prayer, he prepared in a hurry his breakfast and a Masala tea. He ate quietly, then he took his cup of tea and settled comfortably in front of his laptop. After the system finished running the initialization sequence, it started the "*ConApp*" application where all the company's employees were logged in. For a period of two hours the man finished writing some codes that were to be integrated into the main application as soon as Teresa will deliver the part of the code for the second scenario. He was running locally the test code and extracted the reports before uploading a new code version to server. He saw Kamala online on the internal chat application and he connected with her for a short time to test together the first script that Teresa provided, and the one he had just completed earlier. After finishing the conversation with his colleague, he checked Teresa's status in the internal chat application one more time. She was offline. At that moment Prashant felt that something was wrong. Usually, the young woman was already connected at 12 PM IST. But not this time. The Indian man didn't have any idea what had happened, but with all his heart he started the "*IdAppLocator*" application to check the location of her ID on the Network. "*IdAppLocator*" was an application developed by the Government and implemented in all the companies with which it had ongoing projects.

Prashant was not in the habit of checking the location of any colleague, it really bothered him to invade others' privacy in this way, but Teresa gave him no other choice. And this time he wasn't thinking of her like a manager, he was worrying about her. Just the thought that something bad could happen to her produced a knot in his stomach. The man checked the Teresa's ID in the internal database and entered it into the field displayed on the screen. The application ran for about two minutes and to Prashant's surprise it didn't return any results. Basically, Teresa was not connected to the Network and could not be located anywhere. "*No, it can't be true, dammit!*" the man thought to himself. At that moment he wanted to scream and destroy everything around him. He was angry but not at Teresa, he was angrier at himself. Because he had let her run away without letting her know what he felt for her. He had no idea how to proceed next. He had to find her with any price, and he didn't know how. The only solution was to call Alex even if it meant revealing his feelings for her to the Frenchman. Prashant checked him in internal chat application and at least he was online. It didn't matter if he was busy or not, he called him directly. If there was anyone who knew where Teresa was, it was Alex Dubois. To his surprise, Alex answered him relatively quickly:

- Hello Prashant, the Indian heard the sharp voice of the French colleague.
- Hi Alex, he said. I'm sorry to bother you like this, but I wanted to get in touch with Teresa and I see she's offline. Do you know anything about her?
- Not really. I spoke with her two days ago.

Hearing this the Indian man felt himself tremble. If Alex didn't know anything either, then he had no hope of finding her. However, he added:

- Alex, Teresa is missing. She cannot be located on the Network.
- Prashant are you crazy? said the Frenchman, bursting into a roar of laughter. We are all connected all the time to the Network. Even if you turn off your phone, you remain connected through your identity card. You have no way to disappear from the System.
- But she couldn't be found, Alex. I ran the "*IdAppLocator*" app twice and it returns nothing.

At Prashant's reply, Alex raised an eyebrow dryly. As he knew her, he thought that she could do something to stop being followed by the System. He wanted to do some investigations on his own but first he needed to put the Indian at ease. The fact that he couldn't find Teresa had almost driven him out of his mind.

- Keep calm, Prashant, he told him. I'm sure Teresa will show up. Maybe it's an app bug. I'll let her know you're looking for her when I locate her.

Prashant wanted to stop him, but it was not the right moment. He just wanted to find the young woman and then he would decide what to tell her and what not to tell her. In order not to prolong the discussion unnecessarily, he added:

- Thanks, Alex, for the support. Talk to you later.
- Of course, brother, the Frenchman answered.

After the conversation ended, the Indian man felt worse than before. The thought of never finding Teresa again scared him. She couldn't disappear from his life like that. Not now when the connection between them was so strong. He wanted to see her, to hold her in his arms and tell her that everything was going to be okay. He had never seen her, the only photo that he had was the one from the company's databases. There was nothing else about Teresa, not even on social media. The Spanish young woman was a real mystery to him. He tried for a few moments to not think about her, but Teresa's face was always present in his thoughts. He knew that if he will accept these emotions there was no escape, he will probably fall in love with her. That was exactly what he wanted to avoid. But no matter



how much he tried to get away from her, he felt as if there was an intense magnetic energy that always drew him towards her. He ran the ID locator app again, but the result was the same. He couldn't bear to stay in the room. He grabbed his black leather jacket, his motorcycle helmet and went out. Arriving in front of the house, he got on his motorcycle and sped off through the streets of Nagpur.

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In about two hours Teresa had almost reached on the tops of the *Tramuntana* mountains. The road had been quite difficult but not impossible. She basically climbed a serpentine among olive trees, orange and lemon trees and other local shrubs. Until the first fork, the route was smooth, without difficulties, but then it became more difficult to climb. In some places, due to the strong solar storms that had occurred in the recent years, there was almost no vegetation left, only rocks covered with stones. Once at the top, Teresa took a well-deserved break. She needed to stop, to rest for a while before starting the descent to the *Sóller* harbor. She sat down as comfortably as possible on a rock, closed her eyes, and almost instantly entered a state of deep meditation. For a few fractions of a second, she had even managed to stop thinking about anything. It was just her alone and the soft rustle of the trees in

the distance. At some point her thought returned to Prashant. She knew he was out there, thinking of her. Now she was no longer afraid of him or what she felt for him. She hadn't wanted to run away from him, but she needed to retreat to the heart of the mountains at least for a day. Here she was truly free, away from the System and all that it represented to humanity. A big part of her wanted to go to India, to meet Prashant, but for that she had to accept the Government gorillas inserting the integrated chip into her body. But Teresa didn't want that. All she wanted was that Earth to become a free planet where she and Prashant could live out their love story.

At one point she opened her eyes and she realized that she had been on the top of the mountain longer than necessary. She got up, she took a sip of water and she set off. She had about two hours to go down the serpentines and then about another hour and a half by speedboat from the port of Sóller to the port of Palma. On the way down the route seemed to be relatively easy. Teresa quickened her pace a little because she didn't want to catch her on the road in the evening. Normally on marked trails the possibility of encountering dangerous animals was minimal but during the night the eagles or other local species of birds or animals could appear. Teresa had already covered more than half of the route when she decided to take a

short break. She had come to a fork and, being on this route for the first time, she had no idea where she should go down. She expected the trail to be marked but she saw no mark on the surrounding trees. She analyzed the situation for a split second and realized that both routes led somewhere at the foot of the mountains. Once there it would have been easy to find the way to the port. The young woman randomly chose one of the two routes, and she continued her way. She wasn't sure that she had chosen the right route, but she just hoped she wouldn't get stuck in the forest. Out here in the middle of the forest she had no chance of getting a phone signal without being connected to the Network. She continued for a good part of the route and at one point she suddenly stopped, and she tried to find a way through. Practically on a 30-meter piece of road, the ground seemed to be broken, which made the road inclined or almost non-existent. She looked around her for trees or plant roots she could hold on to but there was nothing. For 30 meters around her there was no vegetation, only earth and boulders. For the first time in her life, she was truly scared. It was a real challenge to get through that part of trail, but she couldn't stay there. She took a few deep breaths and she took the first step. She made another one. After a few steps Teresa thought that crossing that area would not be as difficult as it seemed at first. At the next step, a moment of inattention was enough, and she stepped on a stone.

At that moment she felt how she loses his balance, how the ground escapes from under her feet and she slid. For a few moments she rolled on earth and stones for about 50 meters. Although she was afraid, she tried to dig her fingers deep into the ground to somehow stop the fall, but she couldn't. She slid a little further and then stopped next to a tree. She tried to stand up but her whole body ached. She laid on the ground for a few seconds, then she gathered all her strength and barely managed to stand up. She could feel her whole body shaking, and she leaned her hand on the tree. As she tried to recover as much as she could, Teresa looked for a place where she could sit down to assess her injuries. She saw a bigger boulder a little further and she headed towards it. She sat down and she drank the last drop of water from the bottle. She quickly examined her injuries, and they didn't seem to be anything too serious. The right arm was furrowed with deep scratches due the sliding on the stones and the left knee was full of blood. She still couldn't figure out how bad the wound was. She took the first aid kit out of his backpack and then she realized that she had no item to disinfect the wound with. She had nothing to do for the moment, so she took off her T-shirt and with the knife that was in the pocket of her backpack she cut it into strips, and she bandaged both her knee wound and the one on her arm. Although the sun was still burning, the young woman put on the

sweater directly over the bra and with her knee covered in blood she limped on her way.

Towards evening Teresa arrived near the port of *Sóller*. Since it was too late to find an open pharmacy, before going to the boarding gate, the young woman went into a bar nearby. She bought a bottle of water, and a glass with some whiskey and she headed to the toilet. She hoped that no one was there because she wanted to disinfect her wounds and she didn't need spectators. She entered and to her surprise she was alone for the moment. She washed her two wounds carefully, first with soap and water and then she disinfectated them with whiskey. Both wounds hurt her like hell, but it didn't matter anymore. Then she bandaged them with clean pieces of T-shirt that she had kept in her backpack and went out. She went to the boarding gate at the port and she scanned the ID card. After the green LED turned on, she headed for the first boat to Palma. She couldn't wait to get to her apartment. She wanted to take a hot shower and call Prashant. It didn't matter if it was day or night at his end, she just wanted to hear his voice. Being on the verge of death, she realized that life is too short, and she wanted to continue it with the man she loved.

After almost two hours Teresa was already in her apartment. It was around 10 o'clock at night. She was tired, hungry but at least she had a well-defined target: to find a way to reach in India at Prashant.

## FARID

It was around 6 in the morning when Prashant reached the house where he lived with his parents and his brother. After more than 10 hours of driving like a madman on the highway from one place to another he was tired, sad and he had lost all hope of ever finding Teresa. He entered in the house, closing the door slowly behind him to not wake his family. He just wanted to know that she was okay. Given his distant behavior ever since they started working together, he didn't expect from her to call or write to him personally but disappearing from the “*System*” without a trace was already too much. He went into the kitchen to prepare some tea and he was surprised to see his brother Manish. It was unusual for him to wake up so early. Although he was somewhat saddened by Teresa's disappearance, the man tried to hide any trace of human emotion. Until he will be sure about his feelings for her, he didn't want to reveal this to anyone, especially with his family. Being traditional, his parents will never accept that their sons having a relationship with a woman who are not grown up according to their religion. It was far too difficult. He took his cup of tea

and when he was about to go out, his brother approached him:

- Prashant, what the hell is wrong with you?
- In what sense? I don't really know what you mean, said the man indifferently.
- You're not like that, brother. You have never been away from home at night.

Hearing these words, Prashant had to quickly find a logical explanation. He answered Manish avoiding looking him directly in the eye:

- I just rode my motorcycle.
- So many hours? It's about a woman, isn't it? Don't try to deny it because it's obvious.

Prashant was put in a difficult situation. He was still avoiding answering his brother, but he was forgetting one thing: Manish had been like him once and he obviously knew how to handle these emotions better than him. He looked up at Manish and said:

- You're right, brother. It is about a colleague of mine from Spain. I don't know her, but I feel strong emotions every time I connect with her.
- I knew it, said Manish laughing out loud. That's happening when you love brother. It's never easy, especially in the beginning. And she? Do you feel the same way?

- This I don't know. I find it hard to talk to her about personal things. As it is an official network, we only connect for work related matters.
- Bro, you know that our parents won't ever permit a relationship between you and a European woman.
- I know and this is killing me. She is different Manish. I can feel that.
- I believe you brother, but they won't accept her. Our beliefs are different.
- It must be a solution. I don't know what I feel exactly but I'm sure that I want her in my life.
- You can ask her to convert at our religion, to learn something about our traditions and maybe you have a chance, answered Manish very seriously.
- Ask her? How? I can type her on our internal chat.
- No, Prashant. Call her on his private number or connect with her on alternative channel.
- No, I can't, said Prashant with a trace of sadness in his voice.
- You must tell her something, Prashant. If you act like this, the woman will think that she is indifferent to you. Put your damn pride aside and take the first step yourself like a real man.

The young man knew in his heart that Manish was right, but he was not yet ready. He was afraid



that Teresa didn't share his feelings and that he would be disappointed. But how could he contact her if he didn't even know where she was. He nodded that he understood perfectly what his brother told him, and he entered in his room. He should have felt better but he didn't. Not until he saw Teresa online. Only then will he know that she is safe and that she is there for him.

Instead of sitting in bed to sleep for at least 3 hours, the Indian man turned on his computer. He wanted to check Teresa's location one last time. After initializing the application, the man entered the young woman's ID in the corresponding field. The app ran for a minute and after seeing the result Prashant breathed a sigh of relief. Teresa was back in the "System". He couldn't know exactly where she was because he didn't know the island but the fact that she was there made him feel more at ease. If she was there the man still had a chance to win her heart.

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Teresa opened her eyes, and everything was unknown around her. She still couldn't figure out where she was or why she was there. After the minimalist decoration of the room and the immaculate white of the walls it could only be in a hospital room. She tried to stand up, but she had a pain in her chest area on the right side. She still got

up and stood for a few moments on the edge of the bed. At that moment the door opened, and a pretty doctor came in with a sheet of paper in her hand.

- Don't get up yet, she said anticipating Teresa's intentions.
- How the hell I got here and what happened to me? the young woman asked nervously.
- You came with three broken ribs. You had an emergency surgery intervention and now you must recover, the doctor replied politely.
- Do I have to recover here?
- Not necessarily. I can discharge you on demand if you promise to avoid any physical effort for a month.
- I promise you anything, just let me get out of here. I can't stand in hospitals.
- All right, the doctor said smiling. I think it will help recovery to be in a familiar environment. I'm now signing your discharge sheet and prescribing pain medication.
- Thank you, Teresa said as she tried to get dressed without much effort. Her knee and her arm still hurt from the injuries, but the broken ribs hurt like hell.

She stood up slowly, took the discharge form from the bedside table and walked out. Although she needed to rest, she didn't want to stay there another second. She had a code to finish, and she needed to

come up with a plan to cross the borders of Europe without having to accept the chip implant.

She reached to her room and turned on the laptop. She needed to see Prashant online, to know he was there for her. The company's internal chat opened, and Prashant was there. A part of her wanted to write him, to tell him everything that happened, she wanted to tell him that she loved him, but she was afraid that she would be rejected. Prashant was so distant with her and really didn't seem to feel anything for her. But the young woman didn't want to lose her hope. Not yet. For now, she had to make a valid plan to get to India. She had already thought of an alternative, but she also knew that it was quite risky. She sat there, sipping slowly from her coffee mug, and staring absently at the code that was about to finish it. There was nothing difficult to do but at that moment Teresa's thoughts were elsewhere: with Prashant. She just needed a move from the Indian. And he was there, online, and he wasn't going to take a step forward. But he wanted to know everything about Teresa Jimenez. At that moment, she saw a new message from Alex on the screen. Surely Prashant had asked him to find out information about her. He always did that. At first, she had considered not answering him but after all Alex Dubois was just a messenger. He had no fault for the Indian's distant attitude. However, she answered: *"Alex, I'm OK. I had a small accident on*

*the mountain.... I have an injured knee and arm and about 3 broken ribs."* The young woman wanted to sit on the bed, but Alex called her directly. She pressed the green button to accept the call.

- Teresa are you okay? asked the Frenchman without saying "*Hello*".
- As much as possible. It hurts like hell, but it will pass. But don't worry I will finish the code for scenario 2 today.
- That's not why I looked for you, he replied, dryly raising an eyebrow. Prashant was mad yesterday that he couldn't find you in the "*System*". And you know it wasn't work related.
- I don't know anything, Alex, said the young woman shortly. I've been online since I got back from the hospital, and he hasn't bothered to text me. So, spare me with your assumptions.
- Teresa, these are not just assumptions. That man really likes you. Only it takes some time before he takes the first step.
- I imagine. Please do me a favor. Don't tell him anything about the accident. I don't want him to know about it.
- That would be missing, answered Alex. I think he would be out of his mind. But please, girl, consider that Prashant has a soul.

- I'm sure of it, Alex, but sometimes he is so cold that I don't know what to believe.
- Be patient and you will see that everything will be fine in the end, the man told her.
- OK. Then we have a deal: you don't tell Prashant anything about the accident and I'll take your assumptions into consideration. Now I have a few more calls to make before I start writing the code.
- Ok girl. Take care of yourself and take it easy with your mountain experiences.

It was at that point that Teresa ended the conversation and went to work on the code. She wanted to finish it and deliver it to Prashant as soon as possible. On the one hand, she wanted to prove to him that she could finish the code without Alex's support, but most of all she wanted to be appreciated as a woman by Prashant.

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Farid Al-Salah still roamed for hours on the busy streets of Cairo. He was a solid man with green eyes, white skin, and a sharp gaze. After everything that had happened since the "*Great Change*" had taken place and the new Government had been installed, he still had the strength to believe in a better future. He had seen his mother imprisoned and killed by the Government's men, and he had

seen his daughter kidnapped by the same villains simply because she was born of a mixed-religion marriage. He had nothing left but an immense hatred for a government that had been forcibly established by those who ruled the world. All he wanted was to destroy the “*System*”, but he didn't have enough strength alone. In these moments he needed his younger sister, Teresa. He knew where she was but the only way to leave Africa now was to implant his chip developed and imposed by the Government. He knew that it was a painful and irreversible procedure, but he didn't know what to expect. But he was determined to do it. Without thinking about it, he entered the nearest center for chip implantation. At the reception, he was greeted by a young woman who did not seem to be more than 20 years old, who addressed him politely:

- How can I help you?
- I want to ... to make the implant, said Farid stuttering. It was obvious that he was afraid of what was to come.

The girl handed him a form and said:

- First, you will need to sign this declaration on your own responsibility. Please read it carefully, sign it and then I will take you to the doctor to explain the procedure.

Farid didn't want to waste any more time. All he wanted was to implant the chip and go to Europe, on

the island to meet his sister whom he had not seen for more than 10 years. He quickly signs the form on both sides and hands it to the nurse. She motioned for him to follow her and ushered him into the office of the doctor who would perform the implant. Once inside the room, Farid felt his heart racing. The doctor was a middle-aged man, neither too fat nor too thin but with an unforgettable figure. He showed him a chair and began to describe in detail the procedure he was about to perform. Hearing all this, the man wanted to get out of there and run away as far as possible, but the thought that he would soon see his sister again kept him in place. Like the rest of the world, he thought that the chip was an integrated circuit board that would be inserted somewhere under his skin. But it wasn't like that at all. All the technology was far more advanced than he had imagined. But nothing could change his mind now. He will do it here and now. He fixed his eyes on the doctor and asked him:

- When do you start?
- When you are ready, young man, answered the doctor in a gentle tone.
- Well, let's do it now. What must do?

The doctor motioned for her to follow him into the next room. There was a bed, a set of instruments and monitoring devices, and a computer. Farid sat on the bed and lay on his back.

- I suggest you take off your shirt and lie face down. I will be inserting the implant in the cervical area and need full access.

Farid followed the doctor's orders and waited to see what will happen next. The doctor had already prepared a medium syringe and extracted some serum from a vial. He approached Farid, applied two sensors to his temples and two sensors to his neck, and after connecting him to the monitoring devices with the needle inserted, he empties the entire amount of serum into the man's body and withdraws the syringe. Then he went to the computer and began typing some codes in a programming routine while watching the man's vital sign values on the machine monitors.

Farid was still conscious when the doctor injected the serum into his body. At first, he didn't feel anything, but then he suddenly felt his head spinning as if someone had inserted a drill straight into his brain. He felt an almost unbearable heat that started at his spine and spread throughout his body. He clenched his fists in pain and wanted to get up, but he couldn't. The pain inside his head was getting more and more intense as if all his neurons were dissipating into millions of pieces and then putting themselves back together and the process started all over again. He felt his whole body begin to shake and his heartbeat had reached a critical level. He could hardly see anything around him, only colorful



lights that periodically rotated around him. At one point he manages to raise a hand and gets scared. Instead of fingers he saw only tentacles that reflected with every movement like black shadows on the immaculate white walls and he started to scream. Then the doctor came back from the computer with a tiny syringe and injected a very small amount of serum into her right shoulder and said:

- Done, the procedure was completed successfully. Now the chip is already in your genetic code and in 10 days it will be active.

Farid had already calmed down and all he wanted was to get out of there. He was tired and felt that he had no strength left. He stood up and with all the strength he had left the building.

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More than two weeks had passed, and Teresa was trying to find a good plan to reach at Prashant side. The thought of seeing Prashant for the first time gave her indescribable excitement. She sat daily when she was logged into the company's internal chat and looked at his picture attached to his profile. She wanted to see him every day, to be there by her side but most of all she wanted to hear his voice. Whenever she heard him speak in the project meetings, she felt much calmer. Because she knew that he was there. And as time passed the young

woman felt this connection between them much more intense. She wanted him to hug her, kiss her lightly on the forehead and hold her like that forever. In a way she loved Prashant and what was more interesting was that it was all happening at an energetic level and this thing was hard for most people to understand it. Teresa was always thinking about him, and in every decision that she made she put him first and sometimes she felt him there beside her looking at her with his mysterious black eyes. She closed her eyes and quickly entered in a meditative state. She tries to imagine a different reality where people are truly free. No Government, no System, just her and Prashant in the same continent and the same country. After a few minutes, while the young woman was still thinking about the Indian man who had conquered her heart, she heard as if in a dream the doorbell from the entrance to the building. She picked up her phone to check the image from one of the cameras and was speechless. It was her brother whom she hadn't seen for years, Farid Al-Salah. More than 10 years ago, after his grandmother who lived in Spain had died, he had gone to Egypt to live with his mother. And now he was back in Europe. "*It means he has the chip*", said the girl in her mind. She took the remote control, pressed a button to allow him access to the building, and she headed for the front door. Before opening it, she held his thumb up to a fingerprint reader embedded in the wall and a screen appeared. The

young woman typed two lines of code, then moved her finger closer to make the screen disappear. When she pressed the door handle, Farid was already at the door. He had put on a little weight, but he still had that gentle look as before. She motioned for him to enter in the house. Her brother pointed to the cervical area so that the young woman would understand that he had the chip inside and she not say anything she shouldn't have said. But Teresa had anticipated the move and said with a smile:

- Keep calm brother. No one can locate you here. And not to monitor you. My home is secure.
- Wow. How the hell did you do that? he asked with a hint of curiosity in his voice. Then he adds:
- I don't want to know. It's programming stuff I'll never understand.
- Something like that, said Teresa. I can't believe you're here. I know that after the death of your mother and your wife, you were left alone there.
- Yes sis. All I want is to destroy the Government, but I can't do it alone.

Hearing her brother's words, Teresa showed a smile at the corner of her mouth. And she wanted the same thing, but not now. First, she needed Prashant to be with her. She decided to tell Farid the truth:

- I will help you, brother, but not yet. I still have something on the list, and it can't be put off.
- What it is? the Egyptian man asked, curtly raising an eyebrow.
- I must get to India first.

Her brother was more and more puzzled. He did not understand what her travel to India had to do with the destruction of the Government. And he didn't have the faintest idea how Teresa wanted to leave Europe without accepting the chip implant.

- I don't understand what you mean.
- Okay, Farid. On the project I was contracted now I am working with a team from India. And I think I have some feelings for my manager. In fact, I'm sure of it, the young woman replied.
- Now I understand sis. And what does he say? Does he know you want to get there?
- He doesn't know anything. I need to make a plan but all the variants are risky. And if he knew for sure he would do anything to stop me.

Farid sipped another mouthful of coffee and he wanted to go out on the terrace to smoke a cigarette, but the young woman stopped him and signaled that he could smoke in the room. It was not the best thing but unfortunately the terrace was not secured. He

didn't know how to react at the news provided by his sister, but he still told her:

- Well, how do you want to get to India?
- I don't know bro. Time travel is the only solution.

The man couldn't believe what he was hearing. He didn't know whether to ask anything else or not. With every answer from Teresa, she got more and more scared.

- It's risky, sister. I can't let you do it alone.

Farid realized that his sister would put her life in danger and even though it was dangerous he knew that he had to follow her in this adventure.

- I'm coming with you, he told her.
- It can't be, Farid. Not as long as you have the chip in your body. I don't know how could it interact with the portal energy.
- But I can't get it out. I was informed that the process is irreversible, he replied to his sister.
- It is not like that. It can be extracted by a programming routine executed three times in a loop, but I don't know what the damage would be. I've never tried anything like this.
- You mean you can write the code yourself? Farid asked hopefully.
- I already wrote it a long time ago, but I haven't tested it. Basically, I would have to connect

you through a device to a computer, run the routine 3 times to separate the chip code from your genetic code, and then extract the chip code. It might be a painful procedure.

- Then I will do it. I trust you, Teresa.

Hearing her brother's words, Teresa already regretted telling him about the reversal of the implantation process. She wasn't ready to test the code yet, and she didn't want to use her brother as a lab rat. It was the last thing she would do. If something happened to him, she could never forgive herself.

- No Farid. It's dangerous. I don't know what consequences it could have.
- I take this chance, said her brother. I'd rather let you do it than to live the rest of my life monitored by the Government.

She knew Farid was right. She wouldn't want to live like that either.

- Okay Farid. I will extract the chip. But only when I feel ready and according to my own rules.

Her brother then smiled for the first time in many years. He held his little sister for a few moments. It was unbelievable how much inner strength could exist in such a small body. He too was looking forward to meet Prashant Rathore. If his

sister loved him then it meant he was a special man and he worth all the sacrifices that Teresa will do for him.

## 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 she went out.



Arriving at the port, she easily passed the identification devices and she 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 enabled the power of the control panel. She set her navigation coordinates and she 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 was 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 she 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 coffee shop from inside the yacht club. 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 1 day 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. She didn't want to consider Alex's assumptions even though the Frenchman was firmly convinced that Prashant had feelings for 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.
- Dammit, 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 young woman 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 young woman 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 travel in time to meet Prashant. 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 find a solution to travel 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 swimming 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 Rathore 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 she 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 was sure that some teleportation portals were somewhere on the entire planet. Anything was possible after the "*Great 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 universe. But the truth was quite different. And Teresa knew it. She knew that according to the string theory, there were a multitude of identical parallel universes 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 null. 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 she 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 Rathore 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.

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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 young woman 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; he looked around for a lighter and he lit it. He had never done it before, but he had seen Manish smoking few 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 Teresa 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.

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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 woman 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 young woman 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, she 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 woman 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.

## 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 unlocked the closet door and noticed somewhere at the bottom a rather narrow drawer. He opened it and he 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.

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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 had the intention to travel at Prashant side 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 suffering 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 to make a backup plan.

- Brother, we must decide how we will reach Prashant, said the young woman.
- Well, you said that we should travel through a portal to Prashant location. How we do this?
- Using the portal from the Mediterranean Sea.
- No way Teresa said her brother becoming very nervous. 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.

- 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.

- Let's say that we both reach in the same place. How can we find Prashant? Can we call him to meet as 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.

- We'll think about what we'll do brother. I know that this plan is much too 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 Rathore would be worth all this sacrifice.

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Prashant finally reached in front of his house. He had ridden the motorcycle for hours on the busy streets of Nagpur. He took a few days of vacation as in his country there was the most important Indian holiday, Diwali. 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 "*Great 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, far from the woman he truly loved, and he knew that his family will never accept Teresa as his wife.

- 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. And our relationship is impossible. 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.

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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 woman's voice.

Alex opened the door and he 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 young woman 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 young woman 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. She 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 young woman 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.

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## THE „ARIANS” CODE

Teresa had been in the depths of the Mediterranean Sea for more than half an hour. She knew that Farid and Alex were waiting for her in the apartment, but she wasn't ready to go yet. She was just swimming there among the underground rocks, fish, corals, and other marine life hoping that the situation won't be so complicated anymore. It was hard for her without Prashant, but the thought of becoming a ghost in a land where everything was different from all what she knew scared her a little bit. Although the Indian man had somewhat opened his heart to her, the young woman was not entirely sure of his feelings. She always felt that connection between them, sometimes stronger, sometimes weaker, but she was afraid that the fate had put them in each other's way for a much more important purpose. She was somewhat confused, and she had the feeling that there was one more obstacle that she had to cross before taking a final decision. She wanted to see Prashant, to be in his arms at least for a few moments but it was getting harder and harder to do. And even she didn't know how to resist her own emotions. She needed to hear the Indian's voice, but he wasn't there and that hurt her a lot. She checked the oxygen level and the depth, and everything was within normal parameters for now. The young woman decided to stay deep but she

swam another 100 meters until she reached the middle of a coral reef. It was a wonderful, fairytale image. It was all Teresa wanted right now. She stood still for a while and closed her eyes. She just wanted to sit there still planning her next move.

At one point a bright aura formed around her from nowhere. There was no vortex there, it was just her body radiating a very intense light energy. Her heart began to beat harder and harder, ready to burst out of her chest. Just then Prashant appeared in front of her surrounded by the same aura of bright light. He looked at her distantly with his mysterious beautiful black eyes. The young woman wanted to take a step towards him, but she couldn't move. She turned her gaze to her left and she saw Farid standing motionless and watching everything as if he wasn't even there. Teresa was watching them both and getting more and more scared. She didn't know where she was or what she was doing there. She heard a faint noise to her right and she turned her head. It was Alex staring absently at everything going on around him. "*What the hell is going on here?*" the young woman said to herself slightly indignantly. She turned her gaze to the Indian man. He was slightly frowning but even so he had a beautiful smile that could have conquered any woman. He was probably the most handsome man she had ever met. And now she was madly in love with him. Teresa realized at that moment because



she was there. They were the four elements of nature, and she was the key element connecting them. She could hear everyone's thoughts, feel their emotions, it was a unique sensation that no one could ever understand. She could feel Farid's hatred of the Government and his desire to destroy it piece by piece, she could feel Alex's anger towards those he had once considered parents, and she could feel the sadness from Prashant's soul and his immense love for her.

At one point the auras around them disappeared and in a split second a luminous circle of intense brilliance appeared around them all. There was nothing else around them but flashing lines of code written in light green on a black background. Somewhere in the distance was a shadow. Teresa turned her gaze in its direction and tried to distinguish a human face. But there was nothing, just codes, letters, and numbers without any logic. At that moment, the young woman was no longer afraid because she knew what the next move would be.

There was about a quarter of an oxygen tank left when Teresa opened her eyes. She stopped thinking and climbed at top speed to the surface of the sea. Once there, she swam a kilometer to the boat's location and then she set off as fast as she could for the harbor. She needed to talk to her brothers and of course to Prashant.

In less than two hours, Teresa arrived near the building where she lived. She quickly climbed the stairs and arrived in front of the apartment door. She entered and she headed straight for the terrace where the two men were.

- Guys, we need to talk, said the young woman shortly.
- Teresa, we've been waiting for you for 3 hours. Where the hell have you been? Farid asked with a hint of concern in his voice.
- I've been diving but it's not relevant now.
- Well, you couldn't let us know. We must plan our travel and as far as I know we haven't decided anything yet.
- We're not leaving yet. I have another plan and if it works everyone will be free including Prashant.
- I don't understand what you mean, said Farid.
- We must destroy the "*Arians*", brother. It is the only solution to be free. Once they are destroyed, the Government will disappear, and the System will be disintegrated.
- And how the hell do you want to do that? Alex asked dryly raising an eyebrow. No one has ever seen the "*Arians*".
- Because they are not human beings, answered Teresa. "*Arians*" are a kind of artificial intelligence of extraterrestrial origin.

If we manage to overwrite the code of the "*Arians*" the rest will be easy to solve.

- Do you want to handle this alone? Farid said.
- Not just me. I don't have that much power on my own. To disintegrate the "*Arians*" code, I need Prashant and you both.
- Dammit! Alex said. But it seems complicated to me. To delete the code, we must write a programming routine in advance, and we have no basis.
- And I don't even know programming sister, said Farid.
- It's not necessary brother, added the young woman. Only one of us will overwrite the code and that's Alex. I am the key element that can connect with Prashant and Farid. We will be mentally connected in a matrix and only together will we be able to access the "*Arians*" code. You, Alex, will be connected to me via an interface so you can retrieve the information and at the same time to override that damn code.

Hearing this the two men were speechless. It was a good plan but a damn risky one. Farid knew that his sister also had great emotions, but he had to accept that destroying the "*Arians*" code was the only solution to free the humanity. Finally, he added:

- Teresa, do you know that before implementing the plan you must talk to Prashant? Not by email or text.
- Yes, I know, brother. I will deal with this in due course. It's still hard for me to talk to him but I'll try.
- I don't understand why the hell it's so complicated to call Prashant, Alex said.
- Because I love him, Alex and sometimes love can be complicated. If he were more open with me it would be much easier for me, but unfortunately the Indian doesn't like to speak so much.
- He is quite sociable with me, Alex replied.
- Logical, said the young woman laughing out loud. You are a man, so everything is simpler.

Alex looked at Teresa innocently. He knew that he had to help her somehow. If it was difficult for her to call Prashant, then he had to make him call her. He will find any excuse necessary just to get them talking to each other.

- What are you thinking Alex? the French heard the young woman's voice.
- It doesn't matter, he said absently. He scratched his beard with two fingers and then added:
- Teresa, I'm going to my room. I still have some work to do on the code.

- Okay, Alex she said. I must work now too. I must deliver a piece of code today and I haven't had time to write it.
- May I help you? Farid asked with a smile at the corner of his mouth.
- When writing the code? I don't really think so, but it would be great if you made some coffee or even a Masala tea.
- Anytime beautiful sister, the Egyptian answered.

The young woman smiled at her brother then she headed to her room. She turned on her laptop and she waited for the company's chat application to initialize. Prashant was there, online which made Teresa feel safe. She loved the Indian far too much and she had to do everything possible to destroy the "*Arians*" code once and for all. It was quite difficult, but she knew that it was the only solution for her and Prashant to be together.

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Prashant was there in front of the computer staring absently at the lines of code unfolding on the screen. He had major code changes to make, and he was in no mood to start working yet. At least not until he saw Teresa online. He knew that the young woman had a chaotic schedule, but he wanted her to be there to help her. He was aware that she would

never ask him for help, and he was hurt by her attitude, but he couldn't give her up. He loved her in his own way, but he didn't know how to show it. There were too many differences between them, and the man knew it, but he didn't seem to care too much. The most thing he was afraid of was the fact that his parents won't let him marry her. They will accept only an Indian woman and he had no idea how to convince them that Teresa is the right choice for him. He had agreed to reveal his feelings for her because he didn't want to lose her, but the fact that she was too far, hurt him and that pain was visible. He wanted to get out of there with any cost and he was willing to take all the risks just to be with her. He was still in front of the computer and closed his eyes for a moment. He was too tired, and he just wanted to stop thinking about absolutely nothing for a while. At this moment he felt pressured from all sides, by Oliver who was waiting for the detailed reports, by the colleagues who he still had to mentor them, and he just wanted to escape. It was too much for him and there were moments when he wanted to run away as far as possible. Prashant was still thinking about Teresa when he heard the shrill ring of the phone that was somewhere on the corner of the solid walnut desk. He was in no mood to talk to anyone, but he still glanced out of the corner of his eye to check who the caller was, and he flashed a subtle smile. It was Alex Dubois. The Indian had decided to

answer because he knew he could learn some information related to Teresa.

- Hello Alex!
- Hi Prashant! I'm glad you answered, said the Frenchman.
- Is Teresa, okay? asked the Indian.
- Yes, keep calm. Now that I live there on the island, I keep an eye on her.
- I'm trying, Alex, but it's hard. I'm too far away and I want to see her.
- Prashant, she also wants the same thing as you but don't worry we have a plan, the Frenchman tried to calm him down.
- Bro, I want to leave here and to get to zone II where Teresa is. My brother Manish is pulling some strings but there are risks.
- No, you don't have to take unnecessary risks now. Call Teresa and she will explain everything to you in deep detail. Our plan is a good one, but we also need you to carry it out.
- Yes, Alex, if it means being by Teresa's side, I'm willing to do anything, said the Indian touching his lips with the finger.
- Ok, as far as I know your involvement will be extremely important for our plan.
- In which mode exactly?
- I don't know Prashant. Even Teresa doesn't know yet. Please talk to her. Try it, she needs you.

- Okay, Alex ... I'll call her later, said the Indian, after which he stopped the conversation.

He had already found out everything he wanted. He felt better knowing that Teresa was also trying to plan to be with him. He knew he shouldn't doubt her feelings. The man wanted to call her, but he was feeling some emotions in his stomach. He had never spoken to her directly other than work related matters but having a personal conversation with her, and hearing her melodious voice already made his heart to beat faster than usual. He didn't think twice, and he called her. It was better to do it now than later.

- Prashant, he heard the young woman's voice on the other end of the line. Is everything okay there?
- Yes Teresa, don't worry. I wanted to hear you, he said.

For a few fractions of a second there was a complete silence, after which the Indian added:

- I want to see you, Teresa.
- Me too I want that more than anything, the young woman confirmed what he already knew. Soon we will be together.
- Do you think there is any chance for us? The government will never let me out of zone III.
- To hell with the Government, answered the Teresa with slight emotions in her voice. We



will destroy them, Prashant. After we fulfill our plan, there will be no more Government or System. We all will be free.

Hearing the young woman's words, the man was amazed. It was unbelievable how much determination she could have. At that moment he wanted to know all the details. There was no turning back.

- What are you going to do, Teresa?
- Ok, Prashant. You must know that the "*Arians*" are a form of artificial intelligence of extraterrestrial origin. They're just codes that we're going to crack and overwrite it.
- This is impossible. To be able to overwrite a code you must have a routine written based on that code. Just like you did when you extracted the chip code from your brother's DNA.
- Did you know about it? Teresa asked him surprised.
- Yes, and don't be mad at Alex for it. Someone must take care of you while I'm away, said the Indian. So how do you want to overwrite the code?
- Alex will take care of it. Me, you, Farid must connect in a matrix and only then we will be able to intercept the "*Arians*" code. Alex will take the information from us, he will write the

routine and overwrite the code, the young woman replied.

- When can we do it? I can't wait Teresa. I want to be with you always.
- Prashant, we will do it as soon as possible, she confirmed.
- I will help you with all that is necessary. I love you, Teresa. Please take care of you.
- I love you too Prashant. More than you can imagine, said the young woman with a small smile on the corner of her lips.

These were the last words of Teresa after which the Indian ended the conversation. He was so happy at this moment. The fact that he heard the voice of the woman he loved gave him the strength to continue. He restarted his computer, and he began typing the missing lines of code.

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It was not yet 8 AM when Teresa opened her eyes. She was still sleepy, she wanted to sleep at least two more hours, but she couldn't. There was a morning meeting planned with Oliver and the team and the German wouldn't accept anyone missing. She quickly changed his clothes and turned on the computer. At that moment a new message caught her attention. "*We are so close Teresa. I love you.*" The young woman smiled. Even though she knew

that she would hear Prashant's voice in the session, she replied: " *We'll talk later. I love you too.*" It was all just a matter of time now. There were all four of them, they just had to find the right moment to destroy the "*Arians*" code.

## THE TRAVEL

She had barely finished talking to Prashant and Teresa was already feeling much better. It was amazing how much influence the Indian could have on her. She had heard his voice once more and it gave her hope to fight for his love. She knew he was there, in front of the computer, thinking of her, but the fact that he was still so far away, saddened her deeply. She needed him now more than ever but the only thing that could have him was that connection between them that was becoming more and more intense. She had been sitting there for more than 10 minutes looking at his profile picture on the company's internal chat. Prashant didn't smile very often, but even when he did, it gave to the young woman emotions that she had never felt before. It was the first time when she had truly loved, and Teresa was afraid that their plan might fail and then she would never see him again. And she couldn't bear that. She wanted him to hold her tightly and never let her go. It didn't matter to her whether she lived in India or on the island if she was with Prashant. That's why she had to find a way to get to him even if it meant paying with her life. Prashant

was the man who her soul and heart had chosen, and she wasn't going to give up without a fight. It was a hard fight, and the young woman needed all her strength to overcome all the obstacles that life threw her way every day.

Still thinking about the Indian man, Teresa logged out of the internal chat, she hurriedly closed the laptop, and after pulling out her old phone from its secret hiding place, she left the room. She didn't have a plan yet, but she knew what she had to do. She just had to find a plausible excuse for Farid and Alex and get out to sea in the boat. What she had set out to do was risky and she knew that her brother wouldn't let her go. But she had no choice. Her love for Prashant knew no bounds and she needed him, but she didn't want to involve anyone else in this action. She knew she would miss Farid, even Alex but they were safer staying apart. She won't put anyone in danger this time. It was her fight with destiny and the young woman was on her own. While she was making a coffee, her brother Farid appeared unexpectedly.

- Good morning, sister! I thought you were working, he said.
- No bro. I can't focus right now. I have something to attend to and I must go out, added the young woman, sipping hurriedly from her coffee cup.
- And are you going to the sea?

- I need to go, Farid. Don't ask me for explanations now. Just try to understand me.
- It is obvious that Prashant reached in your soul more than you wanted.

Hearing her brother's words, Teresa smiled slightly. She wanted to answer him, but he already knew how his sister felt. And she also knew that every minute spent away from the Indian man was like a knife in her soul. Without another word, the Egyptian hugged her tightly as if he felt it was the last time when he would see her. He had to let her go even though it hurt him so much. He tried as hard as possible to hide the tears that were already streaming down his face, but Teresa could feel his emotions. Finally, he released her from his arms and with tears in his eyes he said to her:

- Take care, sis, wherever you are.
- It's okay, bro. Do not be sad, please. I promise we'll meet again when the time is right, the young woman said to him as she ran out of the apartment.

She could feel the tears welling up in her eyes, but she tried to suppress her own emotions. It was hard for her to leave her brother, but she knew that at some point she would see him again.

Teresa finally arrived at the port. She passed all the control units and with the heart of a flea she stepped aboard her boat for the last time. She felt

safe there. She switched on the control system, she set the coordinates and she disappeared into the sea far from the Mediterranean coast. She had no idea where she would end up, but she knew she had to find the portal. Or at least the portal will find her. Before diving for the last time into the salty sea water she looked at her phone for a split second. She wanted to call Prashant and hear his voice once again, but she didn't. The young woman trusted her emotions and intuition and she knew that she would see him again sooner or later. She carefully checked her oxygen tank, she strapped his altimeter to his wrist, then she put on her oxygen mask, and she entered in the water. She descended to a depth of about 15 meters, and she drifted for a few fractions of a second. She needed the portal to open, and she didn't even know exactly where it was. There was only one way to find out. Teresa climbed another 7 meters and although she was scared, she took off her oxygen system. If her calculations were correct the portal should open the moment she ran out of oxygen. She went up another 2 meters and then stopped. She could feel the water entering her lungs bit by bit and she could no longer have any control over her body. She closed her eyes and she left herself to fate. At one point, everything around her was flooded with a bright blue light. The young woman opened her eyes and at that moment a vortex formed from the sea water very close to her location. With the last of her strength, Teresa

reached out her right hand in the direction of the vortex and she was absorbed inside. She was aware of everything that was happening, but she saw everything as in a dream. She didn't know what was going to happen next, but she knew she had made the right decision. It was a unique sensation that she had never experienced before. Here in the heart of the vortex even time flowed differently. Everything was made of small blue particles, even her body. There was nothing material there, just pure energy in constant motion. She was no longer afraid because she knew she was on the right path. And her love for Prashant was guiding her to her destination.

Teresa opened her eyes and looked wildly around her. She was somewhere in the water, but she had no idea where she was. In the distance, the shore could be seen but the whole region seemed surrounded by trees, and further on she could make out a few stray ducklings. The young woman began to swim towards the shore. It was quite a distance to shore, but it was the only thing she could do. She swam about 2 km, and she stopped for a split second to catch her breath. She was tired and she felt like her muscles would give out at any moment. She continues to swim with the last of her strength in the hope that Prashant will appear again to save her. But there was no sign of humans there, or at least she saw no one. Her muscles were straining to the



maximum and she could barely move. She felt the water pull her inside like a magnet and she sank. She was about to pass out when she saw, as if through a fog, a figure near her. "*Hang on, please! I'm here.*", Teresa heard as if in a dream the voice of the man who had brought her to the surface of the water and was carrying her quickly to the shore. The man carefully placed her on the sand and checked her pulse. It was weak but she was still alive. He didn't have the faintest idea who the young woman in front of him was, but he reacted as he had been taught in college. He performs a set of 10 cardiac massage movements and 3 breaths. He needed to get her to clear all the water from her lungs before transporting her to the nearest clinic for further investigation. After the second set of insufflations, the young woman recovered. She began to cough, and the man encouraged her to do so. After she calmed down a bit, the man handed her a can of water and asked her to drink. He could see how dehydrated and tired she was. He checked her pulse again and it seemed to be within normal parameters. Teresa was scared, she still had slight breathing difficulties but the man who had saved her was gently caressing her hair.

- Stay calm, he told her with a smile. I don't know what happened to you, but you are safe now.

- Thank you, she replied. She had so many questions for him but for now she just preferred not to talk. At least until she could come up with a plausible explanation. However, she adds:
- Where we are?
- In Nagpur, at Ambazari Lake.

The man began to be more and more puzzled. Physically, the young woman seemed healthy, but the fact that she didn't know where she was made him think.

- I am Manish Rathore. I am a resident doctor. Who are you? And how did you end up in the middle of the lake?

Upon hearing the name, the young woman went into shock. She could feel her heart begin to beat faster and faster. The man approached her and gave her a few sips of water then he tried to calm her down.

- Prashant Rathore, do you know him? the young woman asked after she calmed down a bit.
- He is my brother, answered Manish a little confused. But how do you know him?

Teresa still didn't know what answer to give him. She couldn't tell him anything until she had clearer details.

- I'm Teresa Jimenez. I am a tourist from Palma de Mallorca.
- Nice to meet you, Teresa, said the man smiling.

The young woman furtively examined him out of the corner of her eye. He was a handsome man with beautiful black eyes and a warm and pleasant voice. He somewhat resembled Prashant but unlike him, Manish smiled much more often. He was a sociable person and through everything he did he tried to make the young woman feel comfortable. She wanted to tell him the truth, but she still couldn't. However, she adds:

- I was heading to the airport because I had a flight to Pune, and I was attacked by 4 men. I was scared, I wanted to run but one of them put a handkerchief to my nose and I fainted. Then, I think they threw me into the lake, I don't remember anything.

Teresa was not comfortable lying to Manish, but she had no choice. The man wanted to believe the young woman, but he did not understand why she had appeared in the middle of the lake in a diving suit. It was obvious that she was hiding something from him, but he didn't want to insist. Even the device on her wrist looked suspicious to him but he decided to be patient until she trusted him enough to tell him the real story. He gently took her hand and said:

- I should take you to the hotel before it gets dark. Where are you staying?

Hearing the Indian's question, Teresa froze. Not knowing any hotel in Nagpur, she didn't know what to answer.

- I don't think it would be a good idea to go back to the hotel. The guys know where I'm staying and they have the room key and all my papers, she replied trying to sound believable.
- You might be right, Manish said. I'll take you to our house and you can stay until the situation is cleared up. Except I'll have to get you some clothes. I can't introduce you to my family in a bathing suit like that.
- Can you give me your phone for a minute? asked the young woman. I want to check something.
- Sure, Manish said as he took the phone out of his pocket. He unlocked it and handed it to her.

Teresa was thanking the Indian man and the only thing she wanted to know was the current date. She opened the calendar, and she was amazed. The portal had transported her 5 years into the past, so before the time when the "*Great Change*" took place. The young woman breathed a sigh of relief and she smiled. If she could stop the event from happening

and the “*Arians*” appearing, she could change the future with the risk of altering the timeline. Everything had gone according to plan but for completion she needed allies as Prashant and Manish.

- Is everything okay? the man asked when he saw her smiling.
- Yes, agreed the young woman. She couldn't tell him that she came from the future and that she was his brother's girlfriend.
- Then let's go home. It's been a complicated day and you need to rest; he added before taking her in his arms and carrying her to the parking lot.

After 30 minutes of driving, Manish stopped near a clothing store. He got out of the car and he closed the door behind him. He entered the store while Teresa waited quietly in the car. After a quarter of an hour, the man returned with several bags of clothing. He placed them in the trunk and gave to the young woman a pair of blue jeans, a T-shirt, and shoes. As he started and set off, the young woman hurriedly dressed. Manish was watching her through the rearview mirror. She was blonde with expressive blue eyes and looked so fragile. He wanted to know everything about her. Teresa caught his eye for a split second but she didn't react in any way. She was comfortable in Manish's company, but she loved Prashant.

- Are you married? the man asked her directly and as seriously as possible.
- No, Manish. Where I come from people are not really interested in marriage anymore. It is quite different from what you know.
- It shouldn't be like this. Marriage is important, at least here in India. I know it all seems strange to you now, but you will get the hang of it.
- I hope so, said the young woman trying to avoid the subject as much as possible. She had not even discussed this with Prashant.
- When I pulled you out of the water you were repeating my brother's name. What did you do that for? asked the man. Do you know each other?
- No, Manish. I will explain everything to you someday, but now is not the time. Give me a few days and then I will tell you everything, said the young woman trying to get as much time as possible. After a while, she adds:
- But you? What were you doing there at the lake?
- I was on my free shift, and I always go there to relax and photograph the birds. They fascinate me. What do you work? What do you like to do in your spare time? Manish asked, trying to find out as many details as possible.

- I'm a programmer, she told him. And I like to swim and scuba dive. It relaxes me to be there underwater among the fish and all the marine life.
- You might get along well with my brother. He is also a programmer.
- Does it look like you? Teresa asked trying to make conversation.
- Yes, in a way. But don't expect anything from him overnight. He is introverted and he has a hard time trusting anyone, especially a European woman.

Hearing Manish's words, the young woman smiled. He wasn't telling her anything she didn't already know. But Teresa was a natural fighter. If she had conquered Prashant in the present, she would surely succeed in conquering him in the past as well.

- We will arrive in 10 minutes; she heard Manish's voice as if in a dream.

The young woman already had emotions. She didn't know how the meeting with Manish's family would go, but what scared her the most was meeting the man she loved.

In a few minutes Manish parked the car somewhere near the house where he lived and got out. He took the nets with clothing items from the trunk and he opened Teresa's door, then gently

grabbed her wrist. The young woman got out of the car, and she felt her heartbeat faster and faster. She had such strong emotions that for a split second she lost his balance. Manish was there, he lightly grabbed her waist and held her like that for a few seconds. He realized that everything was happening too fast for her, and he released her. Arriving in front of the house, he opened the gate and motioned for the young woman to enter. Teresa entered and followed Manish. He left the bags of clothing somewhere to one side in the huge hall and he ushered the young woman straight into the living room where his parents were. For the first time in her life Teresa was face to face with the family of the man she loved. She had no idea how to react. But this time too Manish saved her.

- She is Teresa, the young woman I rescued from the lake today.
- Hello, she said with a trace of emotion in her voice.
- Hello young lady, Manish's mother said in a soft voice. Come and sit down.

Teresa came over and sat on a sofa near them and Manish sat next to her. He didn't want to leave her alone now. The young woman looked around for a moment in confusion. Manish's parents seemed decent and even treated her with respect. She expected to see Prashant there, but the Indian man did not appear yet. At this point, Teresa was so tired



she could barely keep her eyes open, but she had to hold on for a while longer. Manish notices the young woman's reactions and subtly intervened:

- Teresa, I should take you to your room to rest now. You've been through a lot today.
- It's okay, Manish. It's still early, she said, trying to bide her time. At least until Prashant came along.

Manish was amazed at how much inner strength Teresa had. He was almost fascinated by her blue eyes and her warm, pleasant smile. He wanted to hold her in his arms and protect her from anyone who would want to harm her, but he knew he couldn't do that in front of his parents and under no circumstances without her permission. And she was still confused, and he didn't want to cause her more emotions now.

At one point there was the sound of the front door. Someone entered. Teresa could barely control her emotions. She heard footsteps in the background, a firm tap on the doorknob and when the door finally opened, and Prashant Rathore appeared. The young woman remained with her eyes fixed on him. He was just like he looked in his company profile picture, maybe even more handsome. He had the same black, mysterious eyes but his look was somewhat sad. The Indian man entered the room and stared in her direction for a few

seconds. He had the feeling that he had seen her somewhere, sometime, although he knew that this could not be possible. He approached her, held out his hand and said:

- I'm Prashant.
- Teresa, she said, giving her hand as a sign of politeness.

The man gently took her hand and held it for a few moments before adding:

- I didn't know that you chose a girlfriend from Europe, brother, said the man looking in Manish's direction.

Hearing these words, Teresa felt the need to intervene. She didn't want the man she loved to get the wrong impression.

- She is not my girlfriend, Prashant. I saved her life today and I invited her to stay with us for a while until she recovers, and she can return to her country.
- Interesting, Prashant said with a subtle smile.

The Indian man didn't mind Teresa's presence at all, but he didn't know what his brother was after. It was obvious that the young Spanish woman interested him more than he let on. He examined Teresa out of the corner of his eye. She was different from all the women he had met so far. He imagined

her for a moment in a saree, beautifully colored and he smiled.

- Someday you'll have to tell us your story, Teresa, Prashant said. I don't know about my brother but I for one am curious to listen to it.

Hearing these words, the young woman was speechless. She didn't know exactly what answer the two Indians were expecting but they weren't ready to hear the real story yet. But since she didn't want to upset Prashant, she answered without much thought:

- Sure. I will explain everything to you at the right time, but not now. I think I should go rest, she said as Manish led her to her room.

Once in the room, she closed the door tightly behind her and she laid down on the soft and comfortable mattress. She wanted to close her eyes for a few minutes and to think about her next move.

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Farid sat there on the white plastic chair placed on the terrace and lit a cigarette. He took a slow drag as he thought of his sister. He missed her more than ever. He didn't know what plans Teresa had but he knew for sure that she had enough power to give them all a better future, a future where his mother

would still be alive, and he would be happy with his wife and his child.

Alex was somewhere in his room, working for hours. He was angry with Teresa for making such a decision without consulting anyone and working too much was his way of resisting. He could understand that she loved Prashant but going through the portal without any assurance that she would reach the correct destination had been reckless of her. It was hard for everyone to accept that the young woman was gone but the hardest will be for the Indian man. He started the company's internal chat app and he saw Prashant online. He doesn't even get to make the connection with the Indian man that he is calling Alex directly.

- Hi Alex! the French heard his voice.
- Hi Prashant!
- Do you know anything about Teresa? I haven't seen her online for a few hours. And you weren't available at all today either.
- Yes, I know, Prashant, said the Frenchman not knowing how to tell the truth to the Indian man. Teresa's gone, bro.
- Where did she go? the Indian asked with a slight note of agitation in his voice.
- She went through the portal. You will meet her in the past.

- In the past? What the hell are you saying there, Alex? Did you smoke something today?
- No, Prashant. Teresa entered the vortex. Her goal was to reach in the past before the "*Great Change*" occurred. She wants to stop the "*Arians*" from appearing on Earth.
- Fuck it! But that means altering the timeline. She cannot make changes in the past without affecting the present.
- She knows that bro, but she'll do it. She loves you and she can't stand being away from you anymore. But she will look for you in the past.

The Indian man did not know what to believe. What Teresa had done was pure madness. He was sad and he felt abandoned by the woman he loved. He knew that if he had had the courage to fight for her from the beginning, Teresa wouldn't be gone now. But she had risked her life for their love, and he had only been analyzing the situation all this time. He was sure they would meet again but he was still afraid for her. Although he still had work to do on the code, he closed the computer and he left. If the future was going to be different in a while, anyway there was no point in working for a company that might never have existed.

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The next day, Teresa woke up a little before 8 o'clock. She was there in the house of the man she loved but she still had a few steps to take before her dreams could come true. She needed to tell the two brothers the truth and she had no idea how to begin. Even if she had managed to delay the inevitable last night, she knew she couldn't do it forever. The young woman initially wanted to wear something casual, sports but she gave up. She dressed a turquoise blue ankle length skirt with orange print, she put on a blue top and tried on a matching a saree like she had seen in a video a while ago. Also, she applied a moon shape Bindi on the forehead between the eyebrows. She understood better that in this point it was no way back. In less than 10 minutes Teresa was down the stairs to reach the living room. She looked flawless. She wore Indian clothes, a light makeup, only her blond hair betrayed her origin. And of course, the blue eyes. She went down the last step and she heard the voices of the two brothers. They were already there but she didn't understand anything as they were speaking in Marathi. Arriving in front of the door, she gently pressed the handle and entered. Upon Teresa's appearance, both Manish and Prashant were stuck. They expected to see her dressed maybe in jeans and a T-shirt like in Europe but wearing a skirt and saree was already beyond their expectations. Prashant fixed his eyes

on her for the moment, and he smiled. Manish noticed his brother's reaction and he looked somewhat surprised. It was the first time that Prashant was impressed by a woman outside India. The young woman walked over to the two men and sat down as close to them as possible. She was going to tell them the truth, and she had to make sure that no one else heard what she had to say.

- You look wonderful, Teresa, Manish finally said. I honestly didn't expect to see you like this.
- Thank you, Manish. You are very kind, the young woman replied.

The man served her some tea while Prashant was still analyzing her. He didn't want to talk now. He just wanted to watch and listen to everything Teresa Jimenez had to say. The young woman turned her gaze to the man she loved, and she showed a subtle smile at the corner of her lips. For a moment the eyes of the two met, and the young woman felt a strong heat throughout her body. Even with that scowl, Prashant looked like the most handsome man in all the universes. While the young woman was looking for an easy way to start the conversation, Prashant asked her directly:

- Who are you, Teresa? My brother told me last night about how you inexplicably appeared in the middle of the lake.

- I am a tourist from the area of Spain, from Mallorca, she answered without thinking.
- It doesn't seem credible to me. If you were kidnapped off the street, then why were you in a diving suit? And why did you ask about me?

Prashant's suspicious attitude made the young woman's mission much more difficult. Manish tried to smooth over the situation as he didn't want to hurt Teresa. The young woman got up and began to pace restlessly around the room. The two brothers stood there motionless waiting for a logical explanation from her. Realizing that she could no longer postpone this discussion, she returned to them and, looking straight into their eyes, she said:

- Guys, I'm not from here. I come from the future, from the year 2040, and I am Prashant's girlfriend from that time.



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## THE PAST

After the relatively harsh reaction of the two brothers, Teresa ran to her room with tears in her eyes. She had expected some bewilderment on their part, and she had even given them extenuating circumstances, but the way how Prashant had reacted was more than she could bear. All this time she had hoped to find at least a small piece of the man she loved, but this Prashant was a completely different man. He was a proud, arrogant man and he did not seem to have little compassion for the suffering of others. It was clear that he was by no means the man she worked with, and she would give her life for. By all appearances the Indian was colder than an iceberg. And this distant attitude was like a dagger in Teresa's heart. The way he had rejected her caused a terrible pain throughout his body. She was aware that she was there for a purpose much more important than herself, but she couldn't bear to stay even for a second under the same roof with this Prashant. She wanted to run away from everyone,

but she didn't know where to go. She was alone, in a country she didn't know it and, in a time, when everything was different. She so badly needed the other Prashant to hold her, but he wasn't here, he was somewhere five years into the future and Teresa had no idea if she would ever see him again. The young woman only knew that she had to block the "*Arians*" code before it spread across the planet, but she didn't know exactly how to do it. She needed Prashant's help, his programming knowledge, but he also refused to communicate with her.

At one point, the young woman heard light knocks on the door. She got out of bed with her eyes still teary and opened. It was Manish. Unlike his brother, he was totally different. He was a warm, serene guy, he had tried to defend Teresa in front of Prashant even though he didn't know the woman's whole history. Although it seemed incredible that she would travel through time and go back in the past to alter some events that would have repercussions in the future, but looking deep into her blue eyes, the man knew that she was telling the truth. And he also knew that she loved Prashant more than herself. He could read this immense love in her eyes, in her gestures, in the way she reacted in the presence of his brother. The man approached her and without any intention of making her feel awkward he took her in his arms. He just wanted to calm her down. It

pained him to see her suffering so much because of his brother.

- You love him a lot, don't you? Manish asked though he already knew the answer.
- Yes Manish. Your brother is everything to me. I left my brothers there in the present and I went back in the past to change some events just so I could be with him.
- But you are aware that if you succeed when you return it will not be the same.
- I know that but I had no other choice. The "*Arians*" code must not spread. I need to intercept it as it appears and overwrite it, Teresa tried to detail the operation.
- Tell me, please, how can I help you? Manish asked. Being a doctor, he had no background in programming, but he was willing to do whatever it took to put a smile back on her face.
- I need a laptop, 2 monitors and Prashant's help. Can you get them for me?
- I'm buying the laptop and the monitors even today, but with my brother's help it remains to be seen, Manish replied after the young woman had calmed down. Prashant is a sensitive but also a stubborn as hell man.
- I'll have to convince him somehow. If he doesn't want to help me then all my sacrifice was in vain, Teresa told him sadly.

- Stay calm Teresa, said Manish taking her hands in his.

The young woman was comfortable in Manish's presence. She was aware that his brother also had that dose of sensitivity, but he was too proud to show it. While Manish was watching her discreetly trying to get at least a smile from her, Teresa was thinking about Prashant. The Indian was extremely intelligent, fearless, and the strongest man Teresa had ever met. And he will stay in her heart forever.

Manish wanted to hug her again, but he was afraid of the young woman's reaction. He didn't want to make her feel uncomfortable. Now that he was certain that Teresa loved Prashant, he just wanted to find a way to convince his brother to help her. He hoped that if his brother spends some time in her company, he will realize that Teresa had a good soul even if she was not raised according to the culture and traditions of India.

Finally, the Indian decided to speak to his brother as soon as he will return home. According to Teresa, the things were moving too fast, there was no time to waste. In the meantime, he turned on his laptop to purchase the supplies the young woman needed to overwrite the "*Arians*" code. He had no idea about technology, but he intended to ask Prashant for help. He knew that his brother would be adamantly opposed but he didn't really care. If

Teresa was happy, that was more than enough for him. He wanted at all costs to help her complete her operation but at the same time he wanted to keep her here in her past. Although he was aware that the young woman loved his brother, he had become more attached to her than he should have been, and he could not bear the thought of never seeing her again. Reaching his room, he took his phone and calls Prashant. He wanted to talk to him at that moment, he couldn't wait any longer. His brother answered him rather quickly, which was a little unusual for him.

- Hello bro!
- Hello Prashant answered the latter in a low voice. Manish was still trying to figure out how to approach him.
- Did something happen?
- I need some advice and I can only get it from you.
- OK. How can I help you?
- I want to buy a laptop powerful enough to run some applications based on the "*brute force*" technique and two monitors.

Hearing his brother's words, Prashant started laughing.

- Manish, do you have any idea what the "*brute force*" technique means?

- No, brother. Teresa needs this to stop the "*Arians*" code. I know you don't believe her, and you don't even want to help her but please do it for me.
- Interesting, said Prashant. You really like her!
- There is no point in talking about it now, suggested his brother. The young woman loves you. She will always see me as a brother.
- Wrong Manish! She loves Prashant from the future, she doesn't even know me.
- It's the same thing, brother. You are also the one from the future. So, are you helping me or not?
- Ok, I will send you a laptop configuration that you can purchase. Monitors can be any. As for my involvement in this, I'm thinking about it.
- Thank you, Prashant! It means a lot to me.
- Don't thank me yet. I want to talk to Teresa too before I decide. I'm trying to find out more about my future self. Talk to you later, Prashant said and hung up.

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After the conversation he had with his brother, Prashant thought for a while. Although Teresa's story seemed more like a sci-fi movie than reality,

the man wanted to believe it. Considering that he had not interacted with foreigners from other continents, it seemed unbelievable that he would fall in love with a white woman from Europe in 5 years. And he was aware that his family would never allow this happen. He wanted to know the whole history. As he struggled to complete a code, his thoughts drifted to the beautiful Spanish young woman for a moment, and he smiled. With those blue eyes, Teresa was a beautiful woman and he, as a man, could not deny that. But the fact that she knew absolutely nothing about their culture made him somewhat reluctant. Now he was sorry that he had reacted so harshly when she had worked up the courage to open to them. He couldn't wait to get home so he could talk to her. He wrote a few more code lines but the app didn't seem to work yet. Prashant was feeling a bit nervous and unable to focus on what he had to do. Thinking of Teresa, the Indian man felt like he was losing control of his own emotions, and that bothered him immensely. He still had two more call sessions before his work schedule was over, but his patience was running out. The past few days he had worked harder than usual to make progress on writing the code and now he was tired. He just wanted to turn off the computer and leave. He started an application, he submitted a request for a few days off, and he left. It was enough even for him.

Prashant walked out of the building and headed towards the nearest cab. Normally he rode his motorcycle whenever he had the chance, but not this time. As he got closer to the neighborhood where he lived, he could feel his heart beating faster and faster. Teresa was giving him a kind of emotion that he had never experienced before. He was afraid of how he might react in the young woman's presence, especially that he might lose control.

Arriving in front of the house, he took three deep breaths in the hope that the emotions will dissipate, and he entered. He needed to see her now and talk to her. He went straight to her room and knocked politely on the door.

- Teresa, can I come in? he asked.

Hearing Prashant's voice, the young woman suddenly felt her face flush and her heart started beating faster and faster.

- Come in, she finally answered, trying to calm down as much as possible.

The door opened and Prashant appeared in it. Teresa stood up and took a few steps in his direction. The man closed the door gently behind him and walked towards her. At that moment he felt that he was losing control and he wanted to run as far as possible, but it was as if he had magnets in his legs. He was speechless in front of the beautiful Spaniard.



He stared at her as his heart felt like it wanted to jump out of his chest. Teresa was standing in front of him, dressed in a red Indian style dress and looking more beautiful than ever. Prashant took another step towards her and wrapped both his hands around her waist. The young woman did not resist, on the contrary, being close to him made her feel somewhat comfortable. The man gently pulled her towards him until she felt her body against his. She felt an inexplicable warmth invade her whole body and began to breathe faster and faster waiting for his reaction. The Indian pulled her even closer to him, he removed his glasses, and at that moment he kissed her as he had never done before. He wanted to hold her in his arms forever. He wasn't sure what he was feeling in that moment but one thing he knew for sure, he needed Teresa in his life. While kissing her more and more passionately, Prashant gently put his hands on the woman's back and caressed her delicately. Even though she knew his brother could show up at any moment, Teresa didn't turn him away. The man had hugged her so tightly that the young woman was afraid she could feel her nipples hardened through the soft fabric of the dress. For a moment Prashant stopped, gently cupped her chin with two fingers and staring into her blue eyes, said:

- Stay with me, Teresa. Here and forever.

The young woman was so excited she could barely speak. Prashant, the man she loved had just

asked her to stay in his life forever. She ran her fingers delicately through his ebony black hair, she kissed his neck softly and said:

- Yes Prashant. I want you in my life always.

At that moment, the Indian smiled. He had the most beautiful smile Teresa had ever seen on a man. Prashant wanted to kiss her again and again. He didn't want to stop there. He wanted her all to himself. It didn't matter that she had no idea about their culture. He would teach her everything she needed to know in time, but he wasn't going to let her leave his side ever again. It was a hard decision to take but he was sure that if Teresa will accept convert to his religion, his parents finally will accept her. He held her in his arms for a while so she could feel his heartbeat. Teresa was aware that through her interaction with Prashant and Manish she had already altered the timeline, but she could not change anything now. She didn't have the faintest idea what would happen when she will return to her present, but she just knew that she had to carry out the plan. She didn't know if she would be able to override the code, but at least she wasn't alone in this fight. The man she loved was beside her body and soul, and even if he didn't have the necessary skills, he was willing to do everything possible to prevent the code from multiplying and spreading.

Without thinking too much Prashant followed his instincts. He threw his black leather coat further into a corner of the bed, he unbuttoned his white cotton shirt one by one, revealing his strong chest. The young woman was curled up next to him with her arms around his neck and he was holding her tightly to him. He began to caress her back sensually, each caress leading to another, without a sound.

Suddenly the man covered her mouth with his in a deep kiss as their tongues savored the flavor of love. Then the woman changed her position and during the kiss, she ran her fingers over the hot skin on the Indian man's abdomen and she introduced them into his black pants caressing him gently.

The Indian lowered his lips to Teresa's jaw, towards her neck and he slipped a hand under the soft fabric of the dress, removing the strap. In one movement the young woman removed her dress revealing her almost naked body in front of Prashant. He stroked the soft skin of her shoulders with his fingertips, making her sigh.

The woman laid her head back enjoying the touch of her breasts against the man's chest as the triangle of curls that hid her femininity rubbed against his abdomen. The man caught Teresa in his arms around her lithe waist and he laid her gently on the satin fabric of the bed. She laid back and watched as

he unzipped his pants and let them fall, then the slips that also fell somewhere on the floor.

He walked towards her. He placed one knee on the soft satin sheet, and he slid toward her. The young woman felt him even before he touched her, she felt his heat and a thrill of excitement ran through her hot body. The Indian laid down next to her then leaned down again to kiss her. He caught her moan with his mouth as he gently caressed her thighs with his fingers. Teresa bucked her thighs up, wanting him more. But then he covered one of her breasts with his mouth and gave to her wonderful sensations that she had never felt before. The Indian man made her forget all her problems.

Prashant ran his mouth over the woman's belly, tasting her skin. The woman's chest expanded, she dug her fingers into his black hair and moaned, tensing her entire body. Then he gently kissed her thighs. He slid over her, kissing her continuously, and settled between her thighs, leaning down to kiss her neck.

- I want you Teresa, he whispered close to her ear. Here and now.

Teresa twisted under him, straining for contact.

- I need you too, she whispered and turned her head to touch his lips with hers.

Teresa held her breath for a moment as Prashant penetrated her hard. Her body stretched and tensed around him, taking him deep inside her where she wanted him so badly. Moving continuously on top of the man, she took him in even deeper, enjoying the wonderful sensations there.

Being desperate to make her his, he rolled her over her and penetrated her again as hard as he had ever done before. They moaned together as they felt the ultimate pleasure then the man held her like that in his arms for a while. He wanted to stop time and stay like this forever.

After a while, when her breathing returned to normal, Teresa slowly stood up and stood for a split second on the edge of the bed. Prashant was still lying there analyzing her every move.

- Get up Prashant, said the young woman with a hint of agitation in her voice. Your brother should appear, and it is not advisable for him to find us like this.

The man looked at her smiling and answered:

- Don't worry. Manish will not enter without permission.

As the young woman hurriedly gathered up her discarded clothes on the mahogany floor, Prashant stood up and did the same but much more slowly.

A quarter of an hour later there was a few light knocks on the door.

- Come in, Teresa said with a trace of emotion in her voice.

The door opened and Manish appeared. Spotting the two still hugging, he smiled. He was indeed happy that his plan had worked. It seems that the beautiful Spaniard had managed to tame his brother's heart. He was holding a box with the laptop she requested in one hand, and the boxes with the monitors were somewhere on the floor.

- I'll take over from here bro, said Prashant.

He didn't mind Manish's presence near Teresa, but he wanted her all to himself now. He carefully unpacked the two monitors. Then, he inserted the plugs into the appropriate ports on the docking station connected to the laptop's power port. After he finished connecting all the cables, the man turned on the laptop.

- Let me help you, Prashant, Teresa said.
- Not yet. I take care of this part. After the operating system is installed, I will let you start because I don't know what you want to do, he told her.

Teresa could have intervened, but she didn't want to. She sat in an armchair and watched the man she loved in action. From time to time, Prashant

would glance back at her and give her a fleeting smile. He liked knowing her there with him. Maybe that was what he needed now even though he was afraid she wouldn't return to the portal in the middle of the lake again. He had to find a way to keep her there.

As the OS installation was running, Prashant turned his gaze to Teresa and asked:

- What will happen after you overwrite the code?
- If we succeed then all humanity will be saved, answered the young woman. I'll have to come back in my own time, and I'll see you there.
- Are you so sure about that? The timeline is no longer the same.
- I know. Everything will be different. I will be able to save Farid's family but unfortunately the meeting with Alex, the other brother will never happen. And your brother may not be married and may not have children.
- Teresa, there are always advantages and disadvantages. You can't save them all.
- I know Prashant. I am aware that the timeline has already been altered. But for both of us it should stay the same.
- But couldn't you stay here forever?
- From the point of view of quantum physics, it would not be possible. There is already a version of me in this time.

- Yes, I know babe, but she's not here. If you don't meet her, nothing bad can happen.

Hearing the Indian's words, Teresa smiled. She really wanted to defy the laws of physics to stay with him here and now. She had no idea what to expect but first she had to succeed in overwriting that damn code. Her entire present depended on this.

- Prashant, I think you are aware that your family won't accept me. As a visitor is OK but to stay as your girlfriend or wife is against your rules.
- These are my community rules but even that these could be changed. You are different.
- Yes, I am but this can't change the fact that I was born in Europe. You know what your people think about Europeans.
- No Tessa, you belong to me now. Maybe my parents won't accept you for the beginning, but we can find a solution.

At that moment Prashant was just finishing the installation of the operating system, which meant that Teresa could start scanning the interfaces for the interception of the "*Arians*" code. She sat down on the swivel chair in front of the desk and the Indian brought another chair and sat next to her. He didn't know how to help her yet, but he wanted to watch the whole operation. Teresa opened a Linux terminal and started typing some commands. She wanted to



access a compiler and write a Java script that would automatically scan interfaces. She had no other alternative to intercept the "*Arians*" code. Prashant watched fascinated how she typed line after line into the compiler window and he tried to understand the young woman's way of thinking. Teresa just wanted to finish the script as quickly as possible. Locating the interface would be easy enough but to overwrite it she would first have to get past the access keys which even Prashant knew could take as long as two days. But the Indian was patient. He wasn't going to leave her side until the operation was complete.

At one point the young woman smiled. The script was completed. She ran it a few times and it seemed to work. She compiled it and ran it again. Then she sat as comfortably as possible in the chair and waited for a while. Prashant was watching all the Teresa's reactions with interest.

- How long are we waiting now? he asked somewhat curiously.
- We are not waiting. The script runs in the background and when it intercepts the interface it will signal. In the meantime, the script for interface access needs to be written, Teresa replied as she opened a new compiler window.
- How can I help you?

Hearing these words, the young woman smiled slightly. She knew Prashant wanted to be helpful, so she moved the first compiler window to one of the monitors and said:

- First, you can follow the interface scanning process. That way I will focus on writing the second script. And when I get stuck on the script, you'll have to help me too.

The Indian was agreeing with this. He was in Teresa's company and that was all that mattered to him. While the young woman started working on the script, Prashant watched on the adjacent monitor as the interfaces unfolded one after another. From time to time, he glanced at the compiler window where Teresa was working. He wanted to be there in case she needed help.

At one point the young woman stopped. She had already tested the first part of the script and she realized that it was not working as it should. Basically, she had used the "*brute force*" technology to be able to pass the access key of the "*Arians*" interface. But unfortunately, during runtime, the password dictionary could not be accessed. Prashant noticed her reaction and he shifted his eyes completely to the script. Even though it wasn't really his domain, he could tell if there was a bug in the code. The Indian took control of the app and Teresa didn't object. He activated the "*debug*" mode,

and he ran the script after he smiled. Before the code for accessing the password dictionary, he wrote a new function that allowed access to the contents of the dictionary only under certain conditions. He called the function in the main code; he compiled the code and ran again. This time the script was working. Teresa took over the command and she wrote the rest of the code lines after which she compiled the entire script. Everything seemed to work now. All that remained was to intercept the interface.

Before the first script finished running, Prashant ran out of the young woman's room, and he returned with a keyboard. He connected it through a hub to the laptop, he kissed Teresa casually on the forehead, then he sat down next to her. The young woman reached out and grabbed the man's finger. The man took her hand in his and smiled tenderly.

Just then a warning sound sounded. The "*Arians*" code had been intercepted. Without further ado Prashant typed two code lines into the terminal and started running the second script.

- How do we overwrite it? the Indian asked, realizing that the operation was beyond him.
- I haven't the faintest idea, answered Teresa. I've never done this before, but I guess we'll find out after we get to it.

- We can probably delete bits of the code and then it won't work anymore, the man assumed.
- I wouldn't be so sure. The interface may be programmed to self-scan and correct its own errors. We'll have to rewrite the code so that it self-destructs.
- It won't be easy, Prashant said, scratching his beard with two fingers.

Teresa knew he was right. When she set out on this mission, she knew it wouldn't be easy. But she couldn't give up now that she had come this far. The future of all the world was at stake, and she could not afford the slightest mistake.

A few hours passed and the script was still running. Prashant sat there, sunk into the soft leather armchair. He was sneaking a look at Teresa. Thinking of the kisses and hugs and her hot body sent a shiver of pleasure down his spine. He wanted her again. Teresa stood up from the swivel chair and walked over to him. The man gently grabbed her hand and pulled her closer to him.

- Not now Prashant, said the young woman anticipating the man's intentions.
- Don't worry, said the Indian, after which he grabbed her waist with his arms and placed her in his arms.

He wanted to hold her there, to feel her body pressed against his until the key to the code was obtained. The young woman couldn't resist anymore, and she didn't want it either. The man wrapped his arms around her waist, and he went down with his fingers caressing her belly in slow motions while his lips lightly caressed the back of her neck. She shifted her position, she brought her knees up on the armchair, she spread her thighs slightly and she settled back into his arms as she pursues his lips with hers. Prashant kissed her again and again. He knew he couldn't go all the way this time, but he wanted to feel her there close. He didn't need more now. The fact that he could kiss her, touch her soft and hot body made him feel an indescribable pleasure. Their bodies were so close that he could feel her hard nipples. He removed his mouth from her lips and continued to kiss her neck while gently caressing her thighs with one hand. The young woman made a sound of pleasure and moved her knees so she could get even closer to his abdomen. The man continued to kiss her and touched her fingers between her thighs where she was extremely hot. Teresa gave a short moan as Prashant pressed her so close to him that he could feel his strength. They were both in ecstasy and their souls were so strongly connected that they knew they had climaxed even without the physical connection being complete. Prashant smiled. She was the woman he loved, his soul mate.

Just at that moment, when the two were trying to get back to normal, the second script had finished running.

- We have access, said the young woman, after which she headed towards the laptop while with one hand, she fixed the straps of her dress.

Prashant also straightened his shirt which was quite wrinkled and followed her. He sat down in the chair next to her and took control of the second keyboard while Teresa used the laptop keyboard to overwrite the code. It had been a day full of passion and love but now they were both focused on completing the mission. They wrote line after line without taking anything into account. They were tired, they were thirsty, but none of them wanted to stop. The destruction of the "*Arians*" code was the final goal.

As expected, the interface of the "*Arians*" blocked them at every step. Whenever they tried to change the code, it automatically regenerated. At some point Prashant realized that what they were seeing was just a secondary interface and stopped and said:

- Teresa, hold on. We need to access the main code. If we manage to destroy that one, it all stops there.

The young woman opened a Linux terminal and wrote a few code lines. The man did not understand what she wanted to do. But she did not stop. She kept writing lines of code until another interface opened on the screen.

- Now Prashant, she said. We only have five minutes to crack the code, after that we're locked out.

The Indian continued to write line after line and Teresa did the same. For several minutes there was a grave silence. They were both working, focused on the mission. Prashant wrote the last line of code and was amazed. On the monitor screen instead of the interface appeared a reptilian face dissipating into millions of pieces while from the speakers a horrifying noise as if coming from the bottom of hell could be heard.

- Go to hell you bastard, said the young woman with a huge smile on her face. The "*Arians*" code had been destroyed forever and the entire world was free now and in the future.
- You did it, Teresa, Prashant said.
- We both made it, together, she said. We are a team now.

## BACK IN FUTURE

Prashant sat in front of the monitor and stared blankly at the lines of code unfolding before him. A terrible struggle was going on in his soul, and even he did not know how to end it. He wanted Teresa forever, but he knew she would return in her own time. The thought that he would never see her again scared him enormously. For the first time in his life, he felt sad and had not the faintest idea how to react to fate. He loved the blonde Spaniard more than anyone could imagine, and he wasn't ready to lose her. He was afraid of the future, but he knew he couldn't keep her here any longer than she wanted to stay. And Teresa wasn't going to stay in the past even for Prashant. Her mission had ended here. At this moment, the Indian was angry with everyone, and he could not find his place anywhere. He knew he had some code to complete but he couldn't focus on working. The meeting with the beautiful Spaniard had affected him more than he let on. Teresa was already there, in his soul, and he couldn't forget her even if he wanted to. He was still thinking about her when he heard a light knock on the door. He didn't know whether to answer or not, he was still too upset and he didn't feel like seeing anyone. Maybe only



Teresa although he knew it would hurt him to see her again even for a few moments.

- Come in, said the Indian finally trying to hide his emotions as much as possible.

The door opened and in it appeared Teresa. The man turned his eyes towards her and motioned for her to enter, after which he said:

- Why have you come?
- I had to see you one more time, Prashant. I couldn't just leave like that. I will always love you.
- Interesting. Why the hell are you leaving if you love me? he said trying to control the anger in his voice.
- Because there is no other solution, Prashant. I messed up the timeline quite a bit. I don't know what can happen if I stay here.
- What can I do to make you understand that I love you?
- I already know that. But our love may not be enough to defy the laws of physics. Maybe we'll meet again in the future, in five years.
- Damn it, Tessa, just maybe? Do you realize that you are not sure of anything? If the portal takes you further into the past or another dimension? Are we going to start from scratch every time?

Prashant sat back on the chair in front of the desk and rubbed his eyes with his hands. He was sad and tired and had no energy left to fight back. The girl approached him, wrapped her arms around his shoulders and kissed him briefly on the forehead. She was sad too and she wanted to cry. She loved him so much that she really wanted to stay there and pay no attention to anything at all. She was with the man she loved, her soulmate, and that was all that mattered for the moment. She had saved the entire humanity from the reptilian invasion but now she needed to do something just for herself, she needed Prashant in her life more than ever. And there he was, in front of her begging her almost with tears in his eyes not to leave. He stood up and turned to her, wrapped his arms around her waist and hugged her with all his might. He needed her by his side, and she wanted to leave. Teresa looked up at him and a tear rolled down her cheek.

- Stay here, Tessa! Prashant said gently brushing a strand of hair from her cheek. I can't risk losing you.
- You won't lose me, that can never happen. Our souls are now connected and belong to each other.
- No, Tessa. Once you step through the portal you don't know what will happen.
- I know, Prashant, said the young woman with a trace of sadness in her voice. But I have a

feeling that the portal is somehow connected to our souls. The first time I was about to drown in the Mediterranean Sea, you brought me there to save me.

- And do you think it will work this time too?
- I do not know. The timeline has been altered. I have no idea what to expect.
- Damn it, Tessa! Do you realize the risk you are taking?
- I know Prashant but I have to go back to the portal and try to activate it. You said that it will be difficult for us right now. I want to remain here, to live in your community but I have the feeling that your parents will reject me in any possible universe.

The Indian approached the window and looked into the distance. He was angry and he didn't want Teresa to see him like this. He had opened his heart to her, and she still wanted to leave. It was more than he could bear. He turned to her and noticed the tears streaming down her cheeks.

- Tessa, he told her as he wrapped his arms around her and pulled her close to his chest.
- I love you, Prashant, the young woman told him. I will always keep you in my heart.

Then she freed herself from the man's arms and ran out of his room as fast as she could. She was far too sad and didn't want to add to the pain.

She had no idea what was going to happen, but she hoped the portal would take her to her time. It was her only chance to see Prashant again and she knew it. She took only her altimeter with her and headed towards Manish's room. She needed to get to the lake, and she needed him to take her as close to the location as possible. The man had agreed to help her even though it pained him to see his brother so sad. But he had promised Teresa and he couldn't go back. He took his car keys and went out to meet the Spaniard who was waiting for him at the door.

- Teresa are you sure you want to leave? he asked, trying to make her change her mind.
- I don't want to leave but I must. It is the only logical solution.

The young woman looked him straight in the eye and added:

- Let's go now. If I see your brother one more time, I might change my mind.

Manish opened the door, and he sat behind the wheel without saying a word. At that moment he was devastated, and he was looking for a way to keep Teresa in the past as long as possible. He glanced at the young woman furtively and became even sadder. She didn't feel like talking either. Here she felt truly loved, and for the first time in her life she felt that she belonged here. It pained her deeply that she had to go but, in her heart, she knew that this was

only the beginning. She and Prashant were destined for each other, and Teresa knew they would find each other regardless of the timeline.

In less than an hour, the two were near the lake where the portal was located. Teresa opened the door, and with tears in her eyes she got out and headed towards one of the boats moored on the shore of the lake. Manish followed her. He wasn't going to leave her alone. The young woman quickly climbed into the boat and tried to push the Indian away, but he grabbed her wrist lightly and said:

- No Teresa don't go out to sea alone. I come with you.

The young woman still didn't understand the man's words, but she didn't resist. He took control and began rowing to the portal's location. As they moved away from the shore Teresa looked behind her and for a split second, she had the feeling that Prashant was somewhere in the distance. A tear rolled down his cheek. She turned her eyes away so that Manish wouldn't notice how much she was in pain. But the man didn't need to see that. He already knew that his brother had ruined his soul and he was aware that she would never forget him.

In less than 20 minutes they were already near the spot marked on Teresa's improvised map. Although the young woman trusted her instincts, Manish hoped with all his heart that the portal would

not activate. She removed some of her clothes and hurriedly put on the diving suit she had taken from the trunk of the Indian's car. She approaches one of the sides of the boat and jumps into the water. Without thinking, Manish jumped after her and he tried to swim alongside her struggling to hold his breath as long as possible. Seeing him behind them, Teresa felt somewhat comfortable, but she feared for him. At one point he stopped and looked at the display of the altimeter on his wrist. They were already at quite a depth, so she decided not to go any further. Every now and then he turned his eyes to Manish to make sure that nothing would happen to him. At that moment, in one motion she removed his breathing system connected to the oxygen tube. He knew there was a risk, but it was the only way to keep the Indian alive as long as possible. The man swam as close as possible to her position and even if he felt that he could no longer resist he did not want to let her out of his sight. Teresa closed her eyes and resigned herself to fate. She was thinking about Prashant with all her being and knew that this time too he would save her. She could feel the water invading her lungs bit by bit but even then, she was worried about Manish.

At that moment, when the man thought all was lost, there in the depths of the lake appeared as if out of nowhere a bright blue light from which a vortex formed. Teresa was almost out of energy but

motioned for the Indian to return to the surface before heading in the direction of the portal. Just as the young woman was a split second away from entering the vortex, Manish grabbed her foot. At that moment the vortex engulfed them both. Manish felt that everything revolved around him. It was a strange sensation he had never experienced before. He didn't know what to expect but he felt the connection with Teresa stronger than ever. He couldn't get her out of his mind even though he felt like his body was splitting into millions of particles. It was as if his spirit was moving freely within the vortex. As they progressed inside that blue light grew more and more intense. It was a pleasant and soothing sensation. Manish knew that they were safe there inside the vortex and even though he couldn't see Teresa he was aware that she was there. He could feel its vibration at its highest level and all he felt around him was pure energy, a unique combination of light and color.

Suddenly the blue light disappeared, and he felt as if he had been thrown from the crater of a volcano. He opened his eyes and there was only water around him. He began to move his limbs slightly and after realizing that everything was working, he looked around in fright. He couldn't see Teresa and that made a kind of fear in the top of his chest. At one point he heard a hiss nearby and the young woman appeared out of nowhere. He swam over to

her and gently grabbed her wrist. In a split-second Teresa recovered and began to swim alongside him with the goal of reaching the surface. She was still flustered by Manish's presence here but made no move. In a few moments they were already on the surface of the water. The man breathed a sigh of relief and began to breathe deeper and deeper. He turned his gaze to Teresa. The young woman tried as hard as possible to regulate her breathing as she looked around for a possible lifeboat.

- Teresa, I know you're angry that I threw myself into the vortex, but I couldn't leave you alone. You can't find Prashant without me, said the Indian trying to find a plausible excuse.
- Conserve your strength until we reach the shore, Manish. And I'm not mad, it's just that it all happened too fast.
- All right. So, what do we do now? Do we swim to shore?
- It is not possible. We need to find someone with a boat to save us. The distance is too long, and we can't hold out, said the young woman after which she continued to swim towards the shore.
- Teresa, wait, said the Indian finally. I think I see a boat in the distance. Look to the right.

The girl turned her gaze in the direction suggested by Manish. She couldn't make it out



clearly with the naked eye but it could only be a dive boat.

- Let's swim over there. Looks like it's our only chance.

The man had calmed down now. Although Teresa wanted to appear strong, he still wanted to protect her. He wished with all his heart that he could hug her, but he knew that this could never happen. They swam almost 1 km and, the distance between them and the boat was decreasing little by little. Although the young woman felt exhausted, she still had the energy to swim. Manish was right behind her when Teresa suddenly stopped and changed direction a bit.

- Teresa, wait! said the Indian.
- It's okay, Manish. We are saved.

The man did not understand what she was referring to, but he followed her. When they had reached exactly 50 meters from the boat, the girl said to him:

- It's "*Rebelde*", my boat. I can't believe that it stayed here all this time.
- But how did it stay? The wind could take it anywhere.
- No, I anchored it before I dived. Let's go up!

Teresa climbed in and she headed for the control panel. She hoped it was still functional.

Manish climbed in after her and went down into the cabin to change his wet clothes into a T-shirt and a pair of jeans left over from Alex. Since the Frenchman wasn't a tall guy either, the clothes seemed to fit perfectly. The young woman removed her diving suit and was left in only her emerald-colored bathing suit. Without thinking, she went down to the cabin in search of a sweatshirt that he knew he had left there. She opened the door of the cabin just as the Indian had already removed his wet clothes and he managed to put on only a pair of beach shorts found in a sealed bag. He was there, bare-chested, and had a more beautiful smile than ever. Teresa looked at him and was speechless. The two brothers looked so much alike that now she had the feeling that Prashant was in front of her. The young woman could feel her heart beating faster and stronger, but she tried to hide her reactions as much as possible. She spotted her hoodie somewhere thrown in a corner of the makeshift bed and she ran over there. At that moment Manish gently grabbed her wrist and brought her closer to him. He stared into her sapphire blue eyes for a few moments before wrapping his arms around the woman's waist and pulling her close to his chest. He was aware that Teresa didn't have the same feelings for him, but he wasn't ready to give her up. At least not now when the young woman was so vulnerable. He was happy to have her in his arms but at the same time sad because he loved her more than he should have.

Teresa didn't know how to react. She wanted with all her being to run as far as possible but here, on Manish's chest she felt Prashant so close. She looked up at the Indian and smiled. The man felt a rush of heat throughout his body. He ran his hand through her wheat-blond hair and then he stroked the soft skin of her cheeks with two fingers. The woman was almost pressed against his strong chest, waiting for his reaction. Manish knew that what he wanted was totally wrong, but it was almost impossible for him to control his reactions. Without thinking too much he caught Teresa's chin with two fingers and kissed her delicately and passionately at the same time. He didn't want to think about anything, not even Prashant. He wanted to feel her as close to him as possible even though he was aware that she would never love him as his brother. Teresa expected this move from Manish, but she didn't back down. There in his arms she felt safe, and she knew he wouldn't go any further than that.

Suddenly she went back and feeling her heart beating still faster said:

- We can't do this Manish. It's totally wrong.
- I'm sorry, said the Indian man with a lot of emotions in his voice. I didn't want to upset you.

She hurriedly pulled his hoodie over the swimming bath and in the moment when she felt the

heavy fabric of the sweatshirt touching her breasts she moaned.

- What happened, Tessa? he asked with a hint of concern in his voice. Is something hurting you?
- It's nothing, stay calm, answered the young woman climbing the stairs to reach the deck.

Manish climbed after her. He wanted to make sure she was okay. As Teresa turned on the control panel the Indian raised the anchor and went alongside her. The young woman felt a slight dizziness and instinctively moved her hand to her womb. The man grabbed her by the shoulders and helped her sit in the chair in front of the control desk.

- Please Teresa, tell me what is it? I'm a doctor, I can help you.
- I feel sick, Manish.
- Since when? asked the Indian. In this moment he was worried for her, and he tried to think like a doctor.
- Since few days. I was better last days but today I was feeling some pains that I didn't have before.

Without thinking, the man lightly touched her breasts with his fingers and asked:

- It hurts, doesn't it?

The young woman nodded her head slightly. Manish brought his hand to her belly, caressed it gently and said:

- Tessa, I can't confirm yet, but I think you are pregnant.

At that moment the young woman was speechless. She expected anything but this. She was in so much pain that Prashant was not with her now. And she didn't even know if there ever would be. She had so much to tell him, and he was somewhere far in the past.

- Are you sure Manish? Teresa asked the Indian.
- You will do a test and then we will know for sure, the man answered. But regardless of the outcome I will never leave you alone.
- You can't stay here. You know very well why.
- Yes... there is another version of me in this timeline. I don't care Tessa about that. I only care about you. I hope you understand that, said the Indian, taking her hands in his.

Teresa knew that Manish would not give up so easily especially now that she was feeling so bad. Still, she struggled up from the bench and headed for the stairs that she led to the cabin. She slowly went down, and she opened one of the drawers of the wardrobe and took out an old oak box. She unzipped it and she took out a metal key and a

plastic intercom device. She still wasn't sure what year the portal had taken her, but the young woman thought it was useful to have them. After a few minutes she returned to the deck, she activated the boat's starting system and she headed at full speed towards the port.

In less than 45 minutes Teresa was preparing to anchor the boat in the yacht club area, in the Arenal district. Although the young woman was deep in thought and in no mood to talk, Manish was around her trying to help her with whatever she needed. At times like this his brother's presence would have been helpful but neither he nor even Teresa knew if they were in the right timeline or dimension. Teresa got off the boat first and the Indian followed her. Before deciding what to do next, she started analyzing the atmosphere around them. Everything seemed unchanged on the island except that not a single drone could be seen flying over the airspace. She could assume her actions had an effect, but she still wasn't sure of anything. As print newspapers had disappeared long before the *Arians* appeared, Teresa headed for the nearest betting house. There was always a monitor where the races and matches were displayed and somewhere at the bottom of the screen the local time including the day, month and year appeared.

- What do we do now, Tessa? Manish asked with a hint of curiosity in his voice.

- I'm trying to find out what year we are in.
- And how do we find that out?
- There's a betting house near the building where I live. There they have some screens, and the local time is displayed.
- We should also go into a pharmacy for that test. I am a doctor, but as you know, medicine is an exact science, that is, it is based on concrete results, not assumptions.
- We will go but not now. If our actions in the past have had an effect then we will need printed money and right now we don't have it, answered the young woman, quickening her pace.

In a short time, the two arrived in front of the betting house in the Arenal 1 area. Teresa took a deep breath to dissipate her emotions and entered. Manish also entered, slowly closing the door behind him. The young woman looked up at one of the screens trying to locate the current year. The man saw the location before her and exclaimed:

- Look Tessa. It says 2040. So, the portal took us to the correct time.
- At least that's good. Now we need to find out by which method the payments are made.
- So how were things done before you traveled to the past? Manish asked.
- In cryptocurrencies. Only transactions online with the ID card or directly with the palm of the

left hand for those with a face integrated into their DNA.

- I think the only solution is to enter a store, stand in line for a while and observe what is happening.
- Yes, that's exactly what I was thinking too.
- Tessa, look over there a grocery store.

Teresa looked back and said:

- It's "Mercadona". This is usually where I stocked up. Let's go in and look for a few minutes.

Manish took her ahead and opened the door for the young woman after which he also entered. Teresa approached one of the cash registers and breathed a sigh of relief when she saw a customer hand the cashier a 20-euro bill. The man gently took her hand and smiled. They left the store and headed towards the building where Teresa lived.

Once they got to the front of the building, the young woman took out the access key and ran it through the reader system and was somewhat surprised when the door opened. They climbed the stairs that led to the floor where her apartment was in the greatest silence, Teresa unlocked the door with the key taken from the wooden box on the boat and they entered the apartment. She was stunned when she saw a man's black leather jacket on the mahogany hanger in the hall and grabbed Manish by



the wrist. She was kind of scared because she knew she had nothing to look for a man in her apartment.

- What happened Tessa? You look scared, said the Indian noticing her spontaneous reaction.
- Something is wrong, Manish. Look at the jacket on the hanger. A man lives here.
- Are you sure it's not yours?
- Absolutely sure, affirmed the young woman, after which she heads towards the kitchen with her heart the size of a flea. She hoped to find some answers there.

The kitchen door was partially open but there weren't many clues. There was a plate, a fork, and a knife in the sink and only a pan of oil on the stove. Manish opened the fridge door and to his surprise it was stocked. There were eggs, butter, cheese, tomatoes and even some canned fish. So, it was obvious someone lived there. At least they had food. Teresa inspected the living room, which appeared to be unchanged. She headed to her room and was speechless. The bed was as she had left it, but the laptop was on only because it had gone into standby due to lack of activity. She wanted to take a few more steps to reach the office but at that moment she felt a strong stab in her womb, and she groaned. Manish came near her and helped her lie on the bed.

- Enough Tessa, he said. I'm going to make him something to eat and then you need to rest. If you don't think about yourself at least do it for your child and Prashant's.

Teresa didn't object. She had no energy left for anything, not even to eat. She laid there with her eyes closed for a few moments. She turned on his side and palmed her womb. She couldn't believe that she would have a child with the man she loved with all her heart. She wanted to sleep and wake up in a universe where Prashant was by her side. After a few moments, Manish came back into the room, and he sat next to her. He wanted to protect her and the child she was going to have. It was his duty as Prashant's brother. He sat behind her and hugged her. He didn't want to do her any harm, all he wanted was for her to feel loved.

After a few hours, Teresa woke up and smiled when she saw Manish sitting on the swivel chair in the office. She sat on the edge of the bed for a few seconds and then she stood up. She wanted to take a shower, change her clothes and then eat. While she took out clean clothes from the closet, Manish quickly made tea and brought her a cup and then said:

- Drink it now while it's hot, Tessa. You see I went to the pharmacy and took a pregnancy test. I left it in your bathroom.

- How? asked the astonished girl. Where did you get the money, I mean euros?
- From the other room. There were two 10-euro bills on the desk, and I borrowed them.
- Fuck it! There really is a stranger living in my apartment. Why the hell didn't he come by now?
- I don't know Tessa. It will appear for sure.
- All right, she says, after which she went directly into the shower cabin. The test could wait a while.

In less than 20 minutes, Teresa was out of the shower stall. She felt rested, clean, and more alive than ever. She hurriedly dressed and began the procedure of taking the pregnancy test. He extracted the necessary drops with the pipette and dripped them into the sample compartment, after which he slid the lid and she exited. She left the test somewhere on the desk and she started drying her hair. Manish was in the kitchen preparing some food for them. In a few moments Teresa came back holding the test in one hand. The waiting time passed but the woman did not have enough courage to see the result by herself. She placed it on the corner of the table, next to the Indian, after which she said:

- Do you want to look? I don't know if I can, I have too many emotions.

The man took it with three fingers and in one movement slid the lid covering the result after which he smiled. Teresa looked, she saw the two red lines and a tear appeared in the corner of her eye. She was happy but at the same time sad because the man she loved, her soul mate was not there with her. She touched her womb with her hands, and she said:

- You were right, Manish. I am carrying Prashant's child, so you will become an uncle.

Just then there was a noise behind the kitchen door and Teresa turned her gaze in that direction as Manish went to see what it was about. The man opened the door and inside was... Prashant. The young woman turned her gaze towards him and felt her heartbeat faster and faster. Prashant in turn looked at her not knowing how to react. It was the moment he had been waiting for 5 years and now that the woman he loved was in front of him he felt lost. He walked over to her and held her tightly in his arms as tears streamed down his cheeks. Manish had quietly retreated to the living room as he did not want to disturb. There was a time when Teresa and Prashant had to be alone. Teresa looked up at Prashant and he sealed her lips with a tender and passionate kiss at the same time. He never wanted to let her go from his arms.

- Tessa, he said as he tried to wipe the tears from his eyes. He was so excited he could hardly speak.
- Don't say anything, Prashant. Not now. Just keep me in your arms.

The man touched her womb with his hand and smiled. Even if their relationship was still not accepted by his family, he was not going to give up the beautiful Spaniard. She and their child were his priority now. He picked her up and placed her gently on the sofa in the living room. Manish was there but Prashant also needed him by his side. For the past five years he had been looking for him in every possible place and he thought he would never see him again.

- Nice to see you again brother Prashant said finally. I had no idea that you had gone through the portal.
- Someone had to take care of your girlfriend while you tried to obey the rules imposed by the community.
- Manish was a great help to me, Teresa jumped to Manish's defense. In fact, he realized I was pregnant and went to the pharmacy after the test.
- But how did you get here Prashant? asked his brother curiously. As I remember you were in Nagpur, and you had no idea where Teresa lived.

- Well, I didn't know. Alex Dubois gave me the coordinates some time ago, he picked me up from the airport and he dropped me off at the apartment.

Hearing these words, Teresa was speechless. It couldn't be real. If the past action was successful, then Alex was out of the equation. And yet he existed.

- What exactly did Alex tell you? And how do you know him? asked the girl.
- I work with him, Tessa. After you went through the portal to get to the past it was hard for me, but Alex and your brother Farid stood by me.
- It can't be! exclaimed the young woman. Something went wrong.
- Tessa, it's okay. I checked and there is no trace of reptilian on the planet, no Government, and no System.
- But I changed the past, Prashant, said the woman. In theory you shouldn't know Alex and Farid.

Teresa thought for a few moments. Prashant hugged her and placed her head on his legs after which he touched her womb gently. He knew it was too early, but he was dying to feel his baby move.

- Don't think about it babe. I know you have many questions but unfortunately, I don't

have all the answers. And I think nobody has them.

- That could be an explanation, Manish intervened. Tessa, you told me at one point that there was a connection between the four of you.
- Yes, it is true. It is about the four elements of the universe: air, earth, fire, and water.
- Well, I think that's the idea. You and Prashant did certain actions in the past that altered the timeline but at the same time you saved the universe.
- Yes, Manish but from the point of view of physics it would be impossible for me to have connections with Teresa's brothers, said Prashant.
- Theoretically yes. But basically, the four elements belong to the universe so the connection between the elements can never be broken.
- It is plausible, said the young woman. But what I find a miracle is that our baby survived the journey through the portal.
- It's probably a gift from the universe, Tessa, Prashant told her as he kissed her tenderly on the forehead. Our love has withstood space and time, so the universe has rewarded us.