

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 girl 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 girl, 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. "*Resist, 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 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 Futala 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 Desai. 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 Desai, 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 "*Big 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 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 the girl 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 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 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 the sound of footsteps in the background, a firm tap on the doorknob and when the door finally opened in it Prashant Desai 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 long skirt, beautifully colored and topped with a sari 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.

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 the past before the "*Big 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.

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. 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 short 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 Hindi. 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 the universe. 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 girl'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.