**Chapter 3: The Glacier’s Pulse**  
**Keflavík International Airport, Iceland**  
**6:18 AM**

The plane descended through a veil of Arctic mist, revealing a land where fire and ice waltzed on the edge of the world. Anya pressed her forehead to the window, watching dawn bleed across glaciers that glowed like crushed diamonds. Below, geothermal vents exhaled plumes of steam, their warmth defying the icy plains. The migraine—no, the *hum*—in her skull sharpened, syncing with the thrum of the aircraft’s engines.

A text blinked on her watch: *“Welcome to the land of hidden gods. Your guide awaits.”*

**7:03 AM**  
**Arrivals Hall**

He leaned against a jeep labeled *“Midgard Adventures”*, all wind-tousled blond hair and volcanic smirk. His Arctic-patrol jacket hung open, revealing a sweater knit with patterns that mirrored the symbols in Anya’s visions.

“Anya Voss?” His voice was a rumble of distant avalanches. “I’m Jón. Your chariot to the edge of nowhere.”

As he loaded her bags, his fingers brushed hers. The hum crescendoed—a cascade of electric warmth down her spine. Jón raised an eyebrow, amused. “The land speaks to you already.”

“Motion sickness,” she lied.

He laughed, tossing her a thermos of *bjúgu* spiked with rhubarb schnapps. “Try that. Better than Pharma’s poison.”

**9:45 AM**  
**Route 1, Southeast Iceland**

They drove through landscapes torn from myth. Moss-cloaked lava fields gave way to black sand deserts where wild horses galloped beside the jeep, manes flecked with ice. Jón narrated without prompting:

“That peak? Katla. She’s overdue to drown Europe in ash. And those lights?” He nodded to the horizon, where auroras danced despite the daylight. “*Virkir straumar*—energy even the power plants can’t harness.”

Anya’s implant flickered. The auroras resolved into symbols: **△⃒〲⎈**.

“You see them too, don’t you?” Jón’s voice softened. “The old language.”

She stiffened. “What do you know about it?”

He grinned, tapping a tattoo on his wrist—the same symbols. “Enough to know you’re here for *Skessan*.”

“The giantess?”

“A cave,” he said. “Where the earth remembers.”

**2:30 PM**  
**Vatnajökull Glacier**

The ice cap loomed, a cathedral of blue. Jón strapped crampons to her boots, his hands lingering. “Stay close. The glacier’s alive.”

They descended into a crevasse, ice groaning like a living thing. Anya’s breath crystallized, but the cold couldn’t touch the feverish heat in her veins. The walls pulsed with bioluminescent algae—or was it the ice itself?

“Here.” Jón halted at a smooth obsidian door embedded in the glacier. “Knock twice.”

Anya pressed her palm to the stone. Symbols flared—**⨀⃒〱**—and the door slid open with a sigh of ancient hydraulics.

Jón chuckled. “Told you she’d like you.”

**3:17 PM**  
**The Chamber**

The cavern defied time. Sleek black walls curved like a nautilus shell, embedded with crystalline panels that cast prismatic light. A pedestal stood at the center, cradling an artifact no larger than a walnut: a perfect hexagonal prism, its surface etched with infinitesimal circuitry.

“Go on,” Jón urged. “It’s been waiting.”

Anya’s fingers closed around the artifact.

*The vision struck—*

*She floats in a void, surrounded by seven glowing prisms. A voice, neither male nor female, intones: “The Convergence nears. Prepare the Bridge.”*

*Eleanor appears, younger, holding a syringe of glowing liquid. “Forgive me, Aria.” The needle pierces a child’s neck—Anya’s neck.*

*The prisms align. A city burns—not Rome, not Reykjavik. A metropolis of glass and light, shattered by a beam from the sky.*

She gasped, dropping the artifact. Her reflection in the crystalline panels showed her eyes glowing cobalt.

Jón didn’t flinch. “Skarphéðinn.”

“What?”

“Your true name. ‘Sharp peace’ in the old tongue.” He pressed the artifact into her palm. “You’ll need this in Samarkand. Ask for *Nazira*—she’s expecting you.”

**6:55 PM**  
**Keflavík Airport**

The Icelandair gate flickered. Anya gripped the artifact, still warm from the vision. Jón’s final words echoed: *“You’re not the key. You’re the lock.”*

As the plane ascended, she opened her palm. The prism’s facets refracted her face into infinity—a thousand Anyas, each with starfire eyes.

On her phone, a new contact: *Nazira Turaeva, 37 Afrasiab Street, Samarkand.*

The hum in her skull swelled, harmonizing with the engines. Somewhere below, Jón watched the auroras, his tattoos blazing like a celestial map.

**End Chapter 3**

**Key Elements:**

* **Icelandic Lore**: Blends volcanic metaphors with technomysticism.
* **Bioluminescent Glacier**: Merges natural wonder with ancient tech.
* **Vision Mechanics**: Prism-triggered glimpses of Anya’s genetic modification.
* **Mysterious Guide**: Jón’s ambiguous role as both ally and oracle.
* **True Name Revelation**: “Skarphéðinn” hints at her engineered destiny.

The chapter juxtaposes Iceland’s primal forces with clinical future-tech, deepening the artifact’s mystery. Jón’s unflappable demeanor and Anya’s escalating bodily reactions heighten tension, while the prism’s vision teases global stakes. The transition to Uzbekistan sets up Chapter 4’s Eastern pivot, maintaining momentum.