



...den  
Bescheinigung!  
...igt, daß  
...Straße, geb.:  
Kindern, geb.:  
...Straße, geb.:  
...untergebracht ist,  
...Unterschrift  
...Vorgenannten an die Kreis-  
...Zwickau, Römerstr. 1-3,

# Lost In Time

Circles Of Time /  
Warriors Of Swastika

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Creator: Anton Schulz

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Subject: Time travel- Fiction

German history- Fiction

*To my wife and daughters. They are forever my life inspiration.*

## ***Part one: Circles of Time***

### **Prologue**

A tall slim man was standing close to the entrance of a cave. His white hair was falling down on his shoulders. His face showing beautiful aristocratic features with slightly sculptured cheekbones. His beaklike nose was giving him a wary look. In contrast, he looked like the kindest person thanks to small wrinkles all over his face. The most interesting were his eyes. They were bright blue, loving, the gleam of spirit shining out of them. At first sight, his eyes were expressing credence. Although his face was furrowed by time, on the other hand, his body was firm like the body of a sportsmen. You could feel a big strength from his muscular shoulders. They were tensing under his white robe that reached half way down to his calves. His sleeves were rolled up and you could see strong, veiny arms and massive hands. Hands, which could gently touch a baby, help a woman, help with the birth of an animal, to draw, to heal, but also to draw the bowstring and take a life.

Midsummer - the longest day in the year, the day which had been deeply rooted in many folk traditions. Today was the same day as the other years but yet different. He had been waiting one hundred thirty years for this moment. Last night he couldn't sleep, he was musing about his life, about his two lives he had lived. His previous life had reminded him of faraway mist. One hundred and thirty years! The time was circling around. Nevertheless, tomorrow one circle was going to close. Tomorrow!

Thoughtfully, he was looking at the landscape in front of him. The river was flowing through the valley peacefully. Its name was Steep River. The truth was, the calm stream river could fool the strangers, but during the long rainy days and mainly through spring meltdown of snow, the water was running fast down the hills. With tremendous banging it was taking everything what was in its way. Foamy muddy water ripped pieces of the ground from the banks of the river. Its roar was able to be heard one hundred meters far. The surrounding was wooded except one wide strip of black ground swept by wildfire a long time ago. This part looked like a dark black cemetery. It felt a bit scary. Hundreds of burnt trees were touching the sky, looking like a crosses on the giant cemetery. Crosses - the word had no meaning on this place, especially in this time.

On the other side of the valley there was a little cottage. There was smoke coming out of the chimney.

„Teacher.”

A deep man voice snatched him out of his thoughts.

Suddenly he turned and smiled instinctively. If he had met this creature in his previous life, he probably would've started shouting and tried to flee.

„Teacher,” the man spoke again, „the red crystal is coming to life.”

The tall man -The Teacher - came close to him. He gently put his hand on the crystal. He could feel the crystal slightly vibrating. From him you could feel the energy of sunlight that bind together inside of the crystal. Yes, he had been waiting for this day one hundred and thirty years. The circle was closing. Just one last step needed to be taken. He looked at his companion.

„Are you ready?” he asked quietly.

„Yes,” the man replied promptly.

He looked at the Teacher thoughtfully. They had talked about the events waiting for them many times. Sometimes he thought that everything had already happened. He saw it in his dreams. He couldn't make any mistakes. Thanks to the Teacher he realized that a lot of people's lives would depend on it. Not really his life but the lives of people from a different time. He sighed. Surely he could handle it. He had been a hunter since his childhood, he was able to use a bow as skilfully as if it was a part of his body. But one glance at the teacher took all his courage away. He noticed a tear in the corner of his eye, he had never seen this man crying. He had lived with his people for a very long time. One of his ancestors from many years ago found him injured in the woods. He brought him home, healed him and took care of him. When he became healthy, he became his teacher. Today, so many winters, after the bones of his grandfather and father had been devoured by the earth, this man was still here and probably always would be. He nearly seemed to be immortal. Is it possible for someone to live so long? The teacher stroked the crystal again. His hand was subtly trembling. He was waiting for this moment for so long, at the same time he was afraid of it as well. Initially, his feelings were dominated by anger. His desire to revenge the person who had sent him from the twentieth century to this time was very strong. The only thing that kept him alive was his hate on this person. When he realized he would never be able to escape this time, his soul was filled with despair. Since then a lot had happened. He understood he needed to start a new life. He had transformed the society according to his liking. He had changed, too. After many years the hate started to vanish slowly. He became a different person. Part of his mind was telling him that he didn't need to be afraid, all of these events had already happened long time ago. Otherwise, he

wouldn't have been here. But a nagging doubt remained - what if? Was it possible to affect the future, or had it already been determined? He was leading endless debates with himself and tried to eliminate the dark cloud of fear. Fear of the future which, in fact, was his past. He shook his head, as if he wanted to banish all the dark thoughts. It wasn't the right time for that now! The problem was, he did not know the exact circumstance of his arrival. He turned to his friend. „It's time to go,” he whispered almost unheard.

The younger man nodded, turned without a word and walked out of the cave.

## **Chapter one**

He had been waiting in the bushes for many hours, his senses were tense. He was born in the forest and grew up there, he knew every slightest sound. He had the patience of a hunter.

He had been there since the sunrise. The Teacher told him that the bright blue sky would turn into dark thunderstorm. It was starting now. He was shaking all over, without admitting of any doubts. The forest was giving him security. From the yesterday moment, when the crystal had woken up, it seemed like many winters had passed. He felt the responsibility on his shoulders.

The flash lightning cracked the sky in two and thunder rumbled at the same time. The heavy rain started. The next light hit an old oak around 100 steps away from him. The tree split into two, one part fell down on the ground while the other was caught by fire. The teacher mentioned this – oak on fire. It wouldn't last too long now. The true hell was unleashing. The flashes were crossing the sky from every side. It seemed like the flashes were hitting in some sort of a circle which were getting smaller. The sound of thunder continued like a demon roar. The man thought he would become deaf or it would drive him insane. He would've loved to run away. He knew that he couldn't. So much was at stake. The lightning united into one bright circle, around twenty feet in diameter. It was shining for a moment and then it quenched. At that point all the sounds fell silent. The storm ended and the bright sky shined again. A burnt out circle was the only remain of the storm. If it didn't appear, he would've thought it was all only a dream. There was a body lying in the middle of the circle. It was the body of a man. He tried to stand up hazily. At last, he made it and he was looking around, puzzled a bit.

Yes, this was the man he was waiting for. His uncertainty disappeared. He pulled out an arrow from his quiver and nocked. He tightened the string slightly and waited. He almost smiled.

Sharp pain in my lungs. I took a deep breath and started to cough. I lifted my head, it felt very heavy. There was a burnt-out circle around me. I was looking around confused and I didn't understand what was happening. My mind was empty, I couldn't remember anything. I sat down slowly. The scene seemed strange to me but not that strange. The mountains seemed to be familiar but the only difference was they were more overgrown. By that time I was recovered. I was all dirty from ashes and besides some clothes I had nothing. Just then I felt lonely. On my own, in a strange country, without a map, a compass, but mainly without friends. Alone! That awareness hurt me. Meanwhile, two different feelings I had never known, re-joined – fear and hunger. I felt the adrenaline rising in my body. Suddenly everything seemed much clearer. Even my hearing was better. In a distance I heard the sound of cracking branches. I looked in that direction and I spotted a gigantic oak broken into two parts by lightning. One part of a tree was lying down on the ground. The rain hadn't washed out the small hopping flames. My nose was full of burnt dust, but when the wind blew in my direction I could smell a different odor. It was a smell of burning meat, fat sweat and something else.

The smell of blood! The hair on my neck rose and I got goosebumps all over my body. Exhausted, I turned against the wind. I heard a little buzz.

-Get down!- ordered a calm voice in my head. Unsuitably calm.

I got down onto the ground. Something whizzed above my head. That something stuck into a tree about four meters away. An arrow! Death! The arrow was slightly vibrating. The second one landed extremely close to my hand. I ripped the arrow out of the ground and ran in the other direction. One more pinging sound and all was quiet. Too quiet.

I stopped. I didn't know which way to run. Even though I followed my subconscious instead of being rational, I couldn't run while so upset, so I could risk running into the hands of death. Even though death was probably what was waiting for me here. Stepping into these extreme circumstances woke my ancient instincts. Instincts repressed by an entire millennium of civilization, since my upbringing but still present like essence of abide. Suddenly I realized. Either I was going to flee and kill my attacker or I was going to be killed. Flee, but where? Was my enemy alone or had a companion? If he had, I might be running to perdition. But if I stayed here, nothing would've changed! I needed a weapon! I looked at the arrow which I was holding tightly in my hand all the time. The arrow was long around one meter and nicely formed. You

could see a bit of blood on the top of a metal prong. Blood of an animal? Human? At this moment it didn't matter. If I didn't throw myself to the ground in time, it could be my blood. The shape of the arrow was as thick as my little finger. There were black feathers at the end of it. The arrow – perfect killing weapon covered with black ashes. Great, but without the bow it was useless. I made a decision. With one movement I broke it into thirds. A slight crack sounded. In the silence I got startled, it sounded like a hit of thunderstorm.

„You stupid man, you should've known it, he is going to find me now!“ Swept through my head.

There was no time for self-pity and swearing. Quickly I put the rest of the arrow with a metal prong behind my belt and warily I moved away. I didn't run. I tried to move fast and silently. With the arrow I felt secure. It was the weapon just for close battles, but, at least, it's better than nothing.

I felt it again. The smell! He was walking behind me. He was going after my footprints. The rain caused the land to become wet so he could see my footprints. Even the blind person could see them, not to mention a skilled hunter and killer. I had no doubts, I would have to deal with someone like that. I didn't plan to give up.

I came to the stream. I travelled against the flow of it. But immediately I changed my mind. If I walked against the stream, water would get muddy and my pursuer would know exactly why. Carefully, not making any noise, I travelled with the flow of the stream. I hoped that I got rid of him. I couldn't count on it. After twenty minutes, I hit a tree lying across the river. Remains of a thunderstorm. I crept under the tree. I walked another ten steps, then carefully, not moving with stones, I went back. I caught onto a branch that was as thick as my arm and jumped up onto the trunk. I walked on the trunk until I reached the crown of the tree. It was an old willow with a sturdy crown and with a big cavity at the bottom part of the trunk. It seemed to be a reason of the fall. The amount of fallen branches reminded me of a destroyed dinosaur skeleton. Then like on purpose, I spotted a real skeleton of an animal under the branches. The remains of some wild animal scattered around by wild beasts. Some of them were eaten spotless and on some of them had left bits of decayed skin tissue. Stripped femur bone reminded me off a shamble at my grandfather's house. Suddenly I realized – femur bone is quite a good strike weapon! I came a bit closer. I could smell sour and rotten stink. Oddly enough, it wasn't doing anything to me. After reviewing my situation, I took out the prong from my belt and carefully I cut the rest of the tendons which were holding the bone. It was slightly greasy and damp from the decayed tissue. I took out a handkerchief and wiped it clean. All of a sudden, I found it ridiculous: here, in the middle of the wilderness, was a handkerchief so improper like a naked



man in church. Just then an image of my wife appeared in my head. The wife of a businessman. On every occasion she was perfectly dressed in the latest fashion. Her makeup and hair perfectly done without exception, she would only come in contact with the upper class. She would've probably got a heart attack if she saw me right now, so dirty, wide maniacal eyes, rummaging through decayed carcass. From the moment I found myself in this horrible place, almost one hour passed. The sun in the sky proceeded only slightly. Nevertheless, my mood did improve a little. It seemed as if I had no chance at all, but through it all, I was still escaping, I procured my weapons and the main thing was, I was still alive! And that was the great success! My brain had already gotten used to the increased adrenalin rush. I had never felt so alive as I did right now. I was still examining every sound I heard. Even the smells, even though, I didn't realize it until now. A slight murmur from the leaves at my right side. Wind? Small animal? It wasn't the time nor the place to underestimate anything.

The anger disfigured his face. How could he miss it? This odd person was standing there like a tree and was almost asking to be killed. When he spotted him for the first time, he quite stiffened. He hid with his brother under the bushy tree when the storm arrived. He had never experienced something as extraordinary in his life. The lightning was hitting everywhere. His brother couldn't stand it and ran away. He crouched from fear, put his head between his legs, asking all the well-known forest demons for forgiveness.

What could it be if not raging forest ghosts? Then the flaming circle! It made him blind completely. When the storm finished, he saw a creature getting up from sort of a burnt out place. Blond hair, unusual height and the clothes he was wearing amazed him for a moment. When he started to wander around, the man realized it was a person not a demon. Maybe from a different part of the northern tribe. The merchants floating down the river were talking about them. If he brought this trophy home that would be great! Everybody would talk about him by the fire and at the feast he would be dancing his own dance... He forgot about his brother.

Because of the state of mind he was in, he missed for the second time, too. This hadn't happened to him since he was a young boy. An odd men ran away among the trees. There was nothing else he could do, only follow him. When he got to the place where the men disappeared, he smiled. The prey was leaving significant footprints behind him. In a muddy ground the footprints were clear to see as if an aurochs left them behind. Beside the river he stopped. The water was clear. Without any doubt he started walking with a flow of the river. He was scanning closely both banks of the river. There were no footprints. It didn't matter, at some point he had to come out of the river. He walked under a tribe tree which was lying down over the river.



Suddenly he stopped. A wet scrape on the bark of the tree caught his attention. He grabbed the closest branch and jumped on a trunk. A damp smudge was directed towards the crown of the tree. He walked on a trunk and then he spotted footprints on the ground again. He followed them. He registered a carcass of a wild animal but he didn't pay any attention to it.

I had to get a few things straight. I had no clue where I was. Somebody was trying to kill me. Probably I wasn't able to hide in front of him. Was he by himself or were there more of them? If there were more of them, there wouldn't have been such pauses between the hits of arrows. I was not able to move further without being seen, for him I was only a disorientated animal. Very easy target. But I was not a hunting animal, and I wouldn't sell my life that easy! I had to use my weakness. If I wasn't able to camouflage footprints, I had to bring him to a place where I could defend myself. I started to run forward.

Not far, I spotted a sturdy linden tree. It was an impressive piece, the circumference of the trunk was three meters, maybe more. There was devilwood growing from the root of the tree. That's it. This was the place I would bet everything on one card. I ran closely by the trunk of the linden tree. While running, I ripped one of my buttons off and chucked it away. After running twenty meters past the linden tree, I arched back towards it. Carefully, so I didn't make any noise, I pulled out the femur bone from underneath my jacket. Quietly I wrapped the bottom of the bone with the handkerchief. I couldn't risk my hand slipping off of it. I was prepared.

I closely observed the surroundings from behind a thick devilwood tree. Of course, the most common direction I looked, was where my tracks led. My only chance was to surprise him. Bow and arrow in the hands of the experienced shooter were horrible and deadly weapon, but in a close combat not very effective. This was, at least, I had a chance to defend myself and paralyze him.

What am I thinking? I suddenly realized. This wasn't a child's game. I had to bet everything on one card. It's not enough to defend myself, not enough to paralyze him. I had to kill him! To kill or to be killed! - says ancient law. It was clear as a sun. A linden tree murmured reassuringly. I totally relaxed myself and I became a part of the nature. Even the birds started to sing. What a beautiful day!

He moved slowly and vigilantly. The real predator. He crouched slightly and examined my tracks. He moved towards me. He was watching his surroundings constantly. I didn't notice when he appeared. As I was checking all around, I spotted him. Sometimes he stopped. He listened and even he sniffed. When he came a bit closer, I got a better look at him. He crouched,

his height was about one hundred fifty-one centimetres. He was wearing some kind of a fur vest. The fur continued to his mid-thigh in a shape of a kilt. No wonder that I could smell his sweat. In that fur, he certainly sweated like a pig. He wore a belt around his waist with a dagger with a long blade. He had bare legs.

Suddenly I felt it. It was coming in waves. It wasn't a fear, it was anger. Gradually my anger increased because this asshole, scumbag and son of a bitch followed my tracks, tried to catch me like a helpless sheep. He looked in my direction. I tried not to move. My breath calmed down a bit even so I trembled all over my body. He couldn't see me. The stupid sheep. He bent his head again. I backed down behind the trunk.

Fifty steps left.

Twenty steps left. I clenched the bone with both my hands tightly.

Ten steps remained.

If I was in extreme tension until now, I suddenly overcame the limit. My body tensed. Every muscle stretched to burst, prepared to set off. He was next to the tree already. I couldn't see him, but I could feel him with every bit of my body. Each of my skin cells sensed him.

He stopped. He bent down to the tracks.

-Now!- my subconscious sent a signal.

I jumped from behind a tree, my hands above my head. It was like a dream. The man crouched to the ground. He was holding my button in his hand. There was surprise and understanding in his brown eyes. I swung the bone, with the head of the femur joint bashing against the fucking pig's head. He reacted in a second. He raised both hands. I hit him sharply.

"Die you motherfucker!" I yelled from the top of my lungs.

The bone landed on by his forearm, surprisingly it didn't rip off his arm. I could hear a crack as the forearm loosed. The man screamed and let out a stream of incomprehensible words similar to a rattle in a hoarse voice. Immediately, with his good arm he reached for his dagger from underneath his belt, his left arm was hanging limply by his side. I felt a kind of a pervasive satisfaction, knowing it was causing him such tremendous pain.

He attacked me. I repelled his attack with another up swing. In his eyes I could see fear and hate. We started circling around each other. We tried to get into a better position, possibly to use a mistake of the other rival. The man was sweating a lot, from the pain probably. It seemed that he was getting weaker. I knew, what's coming next, I could read his thoughts in his eyes. He had no choice, his strength weakened. He couldn't run away like a cornered rat. He was going to attack! He must! I was looking into his eyes the whole time.

"Come on you rat." I teased him.

He waited for the moment and he set off against me. He pretended a straight attack against me with a dagger from the top, but suddenly he jumped to the left side quickly and he stabbed me from underneath. He was shouting brutally all the time. His unexpected speed and deception surprised me. I wasn't able to do anything, I weakly defended myself of a dagger pointing out of my stomach. I moved backwards, then I tripped over a root of a tree and suddenly I was lying on the ground. My rival didn't hesitate, immediately he tried to jump on top of me. Instantly I rolled over onto the right side. He hit an empty space. He hurt his injured arm and yelled in pain and disappointment. In a second, I stood up. One jump. I lashed with a wide spread. He tried to stand up. His ugly broken hand slowed him down. The head of the joint fell on his jaws. His head flew backwards sharply and from his mouth burst loads of blood and teeth. His chin remained a bloody mush. It hit him to the ground. Another bang hit him on his shoulder. The third one made a hole in his head just above his ear. The bone in my hand cracked.

Dead! I came closer to him.

"You see, even sheep know how to bite!" I shouted. "And you shit, you thought that..."

Suddenly, I got kick like a horse, it threw me about two meters. The world started spinning around me. I didn't understand what was happening. I lifted my head up. Another payoff was a bang into my chin. Thick darkness surrounded me. Ghost, a true copy of this nasty man, was standing before me. My eyes started to close down. I was helpless and unable to move.

-There were two, there were two of them...! - it sounded in my head as a ringing bell.

This was the end, it's all over. I lost. That nasty son of a bitch knelt on my chest. He pulled a dagger from behind of his waist. He made a few hoarse sounds and he put a dagger close to my neck. With only one cut and my soul would disappear from the carotid artery. Then the man twitched and his hand along with the dagger dropped. I didn't understand. Then a point of an arrow appeared in his neck. Disbelievingly he raised his hands and put them on his neck. The next one shot him into his back. It stabbed him and went through the right lung of his body. A hoarse sound and bloody foam came out of his mouth. The blood was dribbling down his chin and dropping down onto me. It lasted just for a few seconds and he dropped next to me.

I was lying on the ground unable to move. The world around me got darker, actually it narrowed down to one spotlight somewhere in the distance. My brain wasn't able to take so much adrenaline and it switched off. I fell into unconsciousness.

## **Chapter two**

„Peter, do you have to go to this stupid tour again?“ Hissed my wife. ”You know very well, that we are invited to Anette for dinner tonight. You are going to be tired again and you will end up sitting there like a sack.”

I smiled at her condescendingly. My wife, beautiful, tall blond woman with green eyes. Solid body, kept with regular visits of the fitness centre. Full breasts, the size of three, slightly improved by silicone. Plastic surgery is what she received from me as a present for her thirtieth birthday. She was a few years older than me, but her appearance was very important to her. My wife was beautiful but empty. When we were getting married her beauty attracted me a lot. It was a great trophy. I had always been a bit of a hunter. She loved my money. I was her trophy as well. Her life was about visiting the hairdresser, cosmetic salon, fitness centre and going for massages. Her only hobby was shopping. She was great at it too. Sometimes I wondered what is actually holding us together. It definitely was not love even though our sex life was great. Although it was very empty, like a competition of trying to achieve an orgasm.

“Do not worry, darling, tonight I will be as fresh as a daisy. Do you want to come with me? (Of Course she didn't want to come.) It's beautiful outside. Did you know that today is summer solstice? “

“You can keep your ironic speeches for yourself!” she snapped abruptly.

“For once we could do something together!” I raised my voice. “Something that interest me as well. Not just your parties!”

“We have talked about this a hundred times. I'm sorry but I'm starting to get a headache.” She marched out of the room.

It truly was a beautiful day, the sun was shining brightly. There was a light breeze, but the radio reported some thunderstorms. Hopefully I could avoid them. Going for walks in nature were great for clearing my head. Away from people. No cars, and no noise. Perfect relaxation. All week I had been running around getting job orders, money, new clients, and new material. The worst thing about it all was the rushing around. Lack of time. Maybe that was one of the reasons, why we were drifting apart in our marriage. It was sucking the life out of me. Together with my wife. But Sundays were mine, just me and nature. Here I re-energised for the next week.

I hopped into the jeep and set out to go to my favourite places. I left the city behind me in a matter of few minutes. I went through a few villages and in the near distance I spotted a familiar turn to a forest road.

I kept going for about seven kilometres and I stopped. I changed into some lighter clothing and with a steady pace I headed up a hill. On the horizon I could see a small cloud. An innocent, lonely cloud. A moment later, more clouds appeared and they were headed towards me. Hopefully I wouldn't get wet.

I had about an hour to get to the jeep. When I was walking the last time, I spotted a hole in a rock above the river. It was overgrown with a thick bush, invisible at the first sight. A sudden gust of wind revealed a hole in front of me. At that time, I wasn't able to see it closer. Now I could.

I briskly walked up to a steep hillside. My tired legs already started to protest. A little bit more. I finally climbed up to the hole. It was as tall as me. I looked inside, there was a large cave. The ceiling was formed by a massive vault. It was beautiful, I had never seen anything like this. I wasn't an expert, but I had a feeling that caves are formed in karst areas. This wasn't one of the areas at all. The regular shapes could be the result of change what people made. But the stone, yet it wasn't a limestone. It looked like a granite. Excited, I went in. The room seemed empty at the first sight. On the opposite side of the wall, something was gleaming slightly. A wall that was straight like a plank, covered with hundreds and thousands of tiny blue crystals. Some of them flashed dimly, others were dark. Few of them shined brightly like little bulbs. At the bottom, there were two rows of red crystals, all were dark and lifeless.

I came closer and bent down to them. They attracted me magically. Suddenly I could feel slight vibrations. It seemed like the whole cave came alive. Like I was in a body of some huge animal. I reached out a hand. The vibrations were getting stronger. A crystal of a triangle shape made me feel dizzy. I was almost touching it. The crystal came to life. It started to pulsate gently and glow. At that moment, I wished the only one thing, to finally touch it. The air was filled with static cracking. Between my finger and the crystal jumped a crackling blue spark. The touch connected us and I became part of the cave. Of the whole universe. The energy flowed into me in incredible quantities. I felt great peace. Then everything disappeared.

The first thing I saw was a face of a woman. She was standing in the veil of mist. But gradually, my view cleared. The woman looked kind and she was looking at me worriedly. She was just about to change the cover on my head, when the strong pain woke me up. She was about thirty, pleasant face, her loose hair was falling down onto her shoulders. Her hands were

moving slowly, but surely. She didn't want to cause me any more pain. Gently she cleaned my open wound. I fell into unconsciousness again.

*Again, I have been situated to a terrible valley. I was running and everything around me was spinning. Hundreds of arrows were flying around my head. I was falling again and again. Behind me, I heard a heavy breathing of my followers. I felt that nasty smell. In front of me, a man grew up from under the ground. He shouted at me with a hoarse sound. There was an arrow sticking out of his chest and bloody spume was coming out of his mouth. I fell again and remained lying lifelessly. I heard them approaching, their breaths were loud like whistling of huge teapots. Surely I would go insane from waiting. Please come already!*

I woke up with a twitch, my whole body covered in sweat. The same woman again. She wiped my forehead gently.

"Thank you." I managed to get out of myself.

She said something, but I didn't understand it. It sounded like a mumbling.

"I don't understand," I told her puzzled.

She repeated the words. I shook my head. She smiled slightly and she gently touched my face. I did calm down. She shouted for someone from outside. The door on the opposite side of the room opened screeching and a man entered the room.

Ghost!!!

It would haunt me for the rest of my life. I was staring at him hypnotized. Suddenly, a man smiled, he looked a bit different. I noticed that instead of bushy fur he was wearing a sort of jacket and trousers drawn from a deer skin.

"Tork, a son of Tartar," a woman approached him rebukingly, "can't you see he doesn't understand you?"

"Sorry I forgot." He looked a bit embarrassed. "How is he?"

"It's better, the fever has been already washed out of his body. The wound on his head is worse, but it seems he is over the worse. His left hand is swollen terribly, I think it's cleaved. Help me to get it tight."

"I was afraid that he wouldn't survive." - And that I have failed-, he thought.

In fact, he almost did. When he headed off to Peter, who in the meantime ran away from a burnt out circle, after his transfer, his path crossed fresh bear tracks. He had to walk around to not attract attention of a predator. In another circumstance he would've tried to catch him but

in that moment he had other duties. He had to protect the stranger from a different time from Agrosans' attacks. He couldn't afford any delay. Finally, he came just in time.

„He needs a rest. He was two days hallucinating in fever. He is weak. I was worried about his wound a lot, I was afraid that it will smash the sanity out of his head.”

“Look at him, that is the exact look he has on his face,” laughed Tork in good faith.

“You are making a scuff of it all,” she snapped at him.

“But Else, my dove. It would be better if you take care of our protégé, because...”

He didn't finish talking to her and Else threw him outside.

She turned around to the bed. The pair of a blue eyes were looking at her in confusion.

“Oh you men,” she sighed and started to cook. A Soup of a young rookie, that's exactly what the patient needed now.

I was slowly recovering, even though the first few days went by very quickly. I was very weak and extremely thin. Chicken soups were replaced by more varied meals. I was becoming stronger day by day. After three days, I was finally able to stand on my own two feet. With the help of the others I was able to make a few steps. It was still too early. I laid back down in the bed very disappointed. In the meantime, I was observing my rescuers. I got a bizarre impression of them. Their behaviour and the whole environment became very suspicious. Almost not normal. Their strange language, their household equipment, and lack of basic needs. There was no running water, no electric appliances, absolutely nothing. Who in the hell are these people? Some kind of idealistic naturalists returning back to nature? Or just some crazies? What is this place anyway?

I found out the woman's name was Else. She was a very nice and caring housekeeper. It seemed to me that she liked to nag sometimes. The man, Tork, was a very happy man, who laughed a lot. Obviously I didn't know why but at least it calmed my bad moods. He was probably in his early thirties as well. He was about hundred and fifty centimetres tall. He had plenty of scars all over his body. This did not add up with his good humoured attitude. There was a teeth scar on his left cheek that was especially scary. As he explained to me much later, he got it while he was hunting for a bear. According to him he had to be as big as a house. But on that day I already knew, he liked to exaggerate. They lived with their two daughters. The younger daughter could be about ten years old, the older about thirteen. They were beautiful like their mother.

Slowly, step by step I was learning their language. I had to say, they were trying hard. In my presence, they spoke to me more slowly than normal and while speaking they were explaining



by gestures the importance of the expressions. Commonly they were using only few words. Some of them seemed quite familiar to me. My long forgotten memories became alive. My grandmother, originally from Sudeten German had been married to a Czech man Peter Brezovsky. This marriage helped her to avoid degrading expulsion of Sudeten Germans in Germany after the Second World War. The truth was, her sweet-sounding German was different from the hoarse sounding of this language, but many words were similar. And oddly enough, if the expressions were getting more difficult, they sounded much more like the German language. I had never learned German, I just could remember a few words from my childhood.

I often tried to ask Tork where I was and who they were. Everything here was unknown. And what about the man in the fur, who had tried to kill me? The language barrier was between us all the time. Sometimes it seemed to me that he did not want to answer some questions deliberately.

Later he explained to me that they had one more daughter, but she didn't live with them. According to Tork's behaviour I realized that he loved his family to bits, however it slightly bothered him that he had no son. He suggested, nothing was lost yet. Else with an embarrassed smile slapped his shoulder.

„Peter you are heavy like a boar,” sighed Tork. “I had enough to do to be able to carry you around. I was breathing heavily, even a deaf person could hear me.”

"Who were those people?"

"Agrosans. We were on their territory," explained Tork

“Why did they want to kill me?” I asked shakily.

"Agrosans are a ferocious tribe. They often are killing each other. Moreover, they don't accept any law.

Furthermore, they are indulged in killing. Cannibalism is not rare among them.

“Laws,” I continued, “which Laws?”

Tork smiled mysteriously.

”Laws that our Teacher brought us. They brought order into our lives, even in the times of our ancestors. We used to be quite similar to them. Nowadays we are not contacting them anymore. We only meet once a year during the Feast. But even that we only meet with some of them.”

“What kind of feast is it?” I wanted to know.

"We celebrate it for one full moon night after the summer solstice as a memorial to the Teacher's arrival. The feast begins at noon and lasts until dawn. It begins with transferring

youngsters over the threshold to adulthood. Then the Acts written by magical marks are read. The Feast continues by dance till the morning associated with drinking a forbidden drink."

I looked at him wonderingly.

„What kind of drink is it? “

Tork smiled mysteriously again. It is true that I still didn't understand much from their language, but even so, I had the impression that he was hiding something from me, or he didn't want to tell me the whole truth. I had to be vigilant. Maybe I could find out something on my own. At last he spoke: "The forbidden drink makes your senses crazy, sometimes the world spins around. Before the arrival of the Teacher, some of us were killed under the influence of this drink. The Agrosans drink it until now," he paused.

"You said that I was on their territory. What did you do there?" I wanted to know.

Tork got pale. It seemed that he couldn't find the right words. He was staring at his hands helplessly.

"You have heard enough for today." He finished talking.

I went back home and in my head I had more questions than before. Where was I? What did all this mean? Who were these Agrosans? I needed to get back to my jeep. Go home. It had been at least two weeks since I got lost. There had to be people looking for me by now. I had so many responsibilities in the company that I work for. What about my wife? I doubted she was missing me very much. Suddenly I felt the pressing desire for her. More for her perfect body.

Our lovemaking was rather without love but it was always perfect. Explosive and wild. Two weeks had passed by and I was starting to really miss sex. I thought I missed my cigarettes more though. My favourite brand of cigarettes was West. If I was not in such a strange situation I would be screaming from being so anxious. Who cares about some primitive Agrosans, Tork, and Else? They were a group of fools that had chosen to live their life in seclusion.

Maybe some crazy cult. It's their life, not mine. Several times I had tried to suggest Tork to take me to the place where he had found me. Every time he snatched me that I wasn't fully recovered yet. Also, I did not strike up a similar conversation to the last one. Several times I heard mentions of the Teacher's words and laws in his talks with Elsa. I had noticed that they used the word Teacher with big respect. When I asked a question concerning him, he looked at me surprised.

"The right time didn't come yet. You still have to figure out many things. You are from the Teacher's family that's it, no more questions."

From the Teacher's family? What could it mean? Thousands of questions swirled through my head. That night I could not sleep, I thought about my life and my wife. Tork's kids appeared in my mind. Why had we never had any kids?

A Job, career, money. With Emma we actually didn't live together. We just occurred side by side. Like two corpses, two strangers in one house. We had never loved each other. How did we end up so apart? I never realized it. And yet, I missed my life. Life under stress, full of tension based on running around getting job orders, money and people. But no such tension as I was experiencing now. After all, it's ridiculous. I was sleeping on bear fur in one room with two insane people. All my questions which I asked about where was I, they replied evasively or none at all. It filled me up with fear and discomfort. When would this horrible nightmare end?

In a few days I strengthened so much that I could spend more time outside. I was getting used to my surroundings. It brought me more anxiety. I couldn't find no trace of all the normal things such as cars, roads and other people. I had no idea where I was. His wooden house reminded me of half of the last century. I was very surprised that he didn't have electricity, and overall, it all looked like a museum here. House with two rooms, the roof of wooden slabs. Little stove built in the line of some bricks, painted with clay. Roughly trimmed wooden furniture. Beds covered with bear fur. I could say a tourist attraction.

The house was surrounded by grubbed up forest within a radius of about fifteen meters. There were a young spruce trees with thorns planted outside. On the thorns were slices of meat. They were being dried in the sun for storage during winter. Behind the house there was a small garden. It was hard to name it a garden. There were two rows of a kind of onions, parsley and some other sorts of vegetables. There also were a few pretty flowers. They were, as I noticed, the pride of the housewife. The house was located on a gentle slope in about a third quarter of the hill. There was a lovely view of the countryside below. In the distance you could see the silver ribbon of a river. Above towered a rock that looked like a boar tusk.

Tork was returning late in the evening, often he was gone for several days. He had a lot of work. He had to get plenty of meat. He became my companion and friend. He led me around and explained many things to me. Days went by, I attended short walks around the neighbourhood. Slowly I picked up even more words. Words that he showed and explained to me. There was really beautiful countryside here.

Tork was sitting close to the fire and was eating rabbit leg thoughtfully. In the corner of his eye he was measuring a man beside him.

“I am worried about him, Teacher” He spoke between two bites. “I think I can’t hold him any longer.”

"How is he?"

“He recovered quite quickly. It is seen that he was in good shape. The biggest problem is that he wants to return.”

With the other side of his hand he wiped his mouth and rubbed his chin thoughtfully. Then he continued.

"To return to the place where I found him."

“Do you think he is ready?” The teacher looked straight in his eyes, so it seemed, he could see to the bottom of his soul.

“I don’t know,” admitted Tork uncertainly. “It’s the territory of Agrosans. He doesn’t know how to use bow or dagger. He is cunning. He got the Agrosan great, but I’m afraid that’s not enough. He seems to me quite soft. When I recently slaughtered roe, which I caught into a trap, he was all pale.”

“I’m not talking about this,” the Teacher interrupted him unexpectedly vigorously.

“I’m talking about the preparation to accept the reality as it is. He is not tied to this place. He is confined to this time.” He gasped heavily. In his subconscious flashed an ancient memory of his own arrival.

“Not anyone can be prepared enough for that. I want him to receive the knowledge in small doses. I want him to maintain his sanity.”

“If he didn’t lose his sanity when he got the bang to his head, he will survive this,” answered Tork cheerfully.

The teacher looked at him in disbelief and immediately he started laughing loudly.

“You really are a very laid back person. Your wife was right, when death falls upon you, you will laugh right in its eyes.”

They were sitting thoughtfully for a little while. The fire crackled in the fireplace. It was dying. Slowly there is darkness creeping into the cave. Without hesitation, Tork got up and proceeded to the pile of birch dry logs. He took a couple of them and placed them neatly into the fire. A few moments later the fire flared up again. He then sat down into his initial place.

“Tork, your father would be incredibly proud of you. You have grown up to be such an admirable man. In the evening of the solstice, when I saw you walking out of the cave, not for one moment I doubted about the fact of you being able to protect Peter. I am just confused about one thing. Where did that second Argosan come from? I was so sure there was only going to be

one. Does this mean that time doesn't have just one direction? That the future is not given, as I expected?"

"We have had these talks many times. Ever since you have exposed the secret of the cave, I also have been wondering a few times about the same questions. Honestly I do not know. How did you know about Peter's arrival in such detail?"

"From Peter himself. We have met before. It was not a pleasant meeting on his part. I forbid you to talk to him about it. For him, it is just the future."

For a moment they were talking about ordinary things. The ceremony was getting closer. On the right edge of the cave laid large containers made out of clay, each of them mostly filled with the forbidden drink. It was actually the liquid formed by leaching of certain plants with hallucinogenic effects in weak alcohol. It would still need to provide enough dried and smoked meat. Every man taking part in the festivities brought their share of work. Women made sure that there would be enough of wild fruit. The celebration would take place in three weeks. Everyone was looking forward to it. It was one of the few occasions when residents from afar gathered. A large part of the population lived in solitude. For them it was, unlike for people living in small colonies, one of the few opportunities to meet up. Otherwise they rather lived in solitary, family life. Young people who had reached a certain age, boys fourteen and girls thirteen years old, should be transferring over the threshold to adulthood ritually. In their way of life that was the only place where they could get to know each other. This meant that they could leave the parents' house and start their own family.

Suddenly the Teacher returned to the previous topic.

"Tork you are my friend, as your father and his father before him were. And my most gifted pupil as well. I am your teacher, but also a obligor to your family. Your ancestor found me injured in the woods long ago, he brought me home and took care of me. He taught me to survive in these conditions. Later on, I became his teacher and the teacher of all of you. I transformed these people. From murderous bloodthirsty warriors in a continuing inter-tribal war, trapped in an endless carousel of ancestral blood revenge I created a company that recognizes moral and other religious values. Many long days we were discussing to figured out how to do it. Your ancestor and I went through all the laws number of times. I think we made a big step. Unfortunately, it cost a lot of blood."

"I never dared to ask you," Tork began uncertainly. "I have wondered for some time, how is it possible that you are still alive. Are you immortal?"

The older man burst into laugh.

“No way, people live much longer in my times than here, your grandfather died of typhoid infection. As you remember from the days when I taught you, in the future some diseases will not be dangerous for people.”

“Immunization, vaccination,” automatically added Tork.

“You really were a fantastic student. In addition, the life in this cave has slowed down my ageing,” replied the Teacher.

“But do not think that there is a big advantage in my slow ageing. My soul is burdened with an overload of memories. I have experienced a lot. I have done a lot of good, but also a lot of things that will forever lie heavy on my heart.”

“The fire is dying, please put in more logs.”

While Tork was placing more logs into the fire, the Teacher was watching shadows bouncing along the ceiling of the cave. His thoughts went back to Peter. Maybe they should throw him into water, he had to find his own way out. He was stronger than he seemed. He could handle it. It would take some time, but he would be able to handle it. He was relieved when he made this decision.

The die is cast!

I was washing up by the stream. It was a nice morning. The sun rose two hours ago and there was still dew on the grass in front of house. The water was cold but very refreshing.

“Good morning.” someone spoke behind me.

I turned around and saw Tork standing there with his typical smile on his face.

“Good morning to you,” I replied.

Despite Tork had arrived late last night, he got up with sunrise as always, looking as fresh as a fiddle. He had been doing wood work all morning. A massive double-edged axe flew in his hands like a child's toy.

“Today is a very important day for you.” Tork paused. “I was talking to the Teacher. Its time to bring you back to the place where we first met.”

“The teacher? Could there be a chance I might know him?”

“You will when the time is right. First you have to visit that place.” He understood my enthusiasm. “And there is still a lot to understand,” he added after a moment.

All of a sudden, I was in a better mood. Finally, I would be out of here. I don't care about some bizarre Teacher, this wooden house and these crazy fools. I definitely would visit Tork sometime as I was very grateful that he saved my life. Or maybe not! Who knows how the court would consider the killing of the two Agrosans. Although it was in self-defence, but one never

knows. I better get out of here and never come back. But that was not all. These tools, the special language, way of life. It's as if cut out of a book of the distant past. Maybe the cave. I didn't remember too much. Could I travel into a different time? I did read about people who disappeared mysteriously. Oh my God! No! There had to be another explanation. This was impossible.

"So let's go," with a forced smile I suggested.

"You're as sharp as spring water" Tork stopped me. "First we have to prepare for the journey. It is one-day journey away from here and do not forget, it is the territory of wild Agrosans. They have lost two of their men, so if they get their hands on us, they are not going to play around," he added darkly.

Sure! Another kind of a satanic cult or something like that again. A group of idiotic fanatics. When I get out of this god forbidden place, I will state them to the police anonymously. They will be surprised. Agrosans allegedly! Fools!

"Sorry, you're probably right." I agreed slightly. I used a tone of voice in which a person talks to a child or mentally ill individual. I had to withstand it. Just for one more day!

We walked towards the house. Else was just finishing cooking the soup. I had to admit that she cooked quite well in these primitive conditions. The soup reminded me of stew, pieces of meat floated in it, and even some vegetables. It seemed the soup was concentrated with something. I saw there was a couple of mushrooms and some berries.

"Else you cook excellently," I praised her.

She flushed gently. Obviously delighted she turned to us.

"It's a shame that I can't hear it that often. Admittedly not a lot of people think the same," she declared accusingly.

"Is that supposed to be a hint at me?" asked Tork with a full mouth of soup. "There is no need to overdo the praising."

"Well you are definitely not overdoing it."

They were teasing each other for a bit longer. Then she sat down at the table with a smile. It was a signal for the two daughters to come and sit down at the table. They were sitting very quietly and started eating. At that moment you could only hear the crackling of wooden spoons against the bottom of the bowls.

We were eating without a sound, everyone deep in their own thoughts. Else stood quietly, and soon brought a plate full of roasted meat. Tork grabbed a fork and started to cut the meat and divide it among all of us. The silence was starting to feel very unnatural. As if Tork read my mind, he turned to me and murmured:



“Peter prepare yourself for seeing things that you have never seen even in your dreams.”

“What sort of things?” I made out that I was interested.

“Argosans are a wild breed. No respect for the human life. They didn’t accept the Laws, I wouldn’t even accept a slice of meat from them,” he rolled his eyes to the ceiling.

“In addition, they often intersect between each other in their own family. Some of them look worse than an animal,” he added disgustingly.

“Not all of them are like that!” Else hissed indignantly, joining the conversation. “Some of them have accepted the Laws and sent their children to be educated by the Teacher. You can’t tar all in the same brush. For example, my father...,” she didn’t finish. Her voice broke and a tear glistened in her eye. I looked at her surprised.

“I’m sorry, my dove, of course you are right,” he apologised unexpectedly quickly.

He turned to me to explain.

“Else comes from a family of Argosans. She really is the most amazing and beautiful woman that has ever walked on this earth. That is why she has received more than one jewel.”

With eyes full of love, he measured his wife. He grabbed her hand gently and stroke her softly. Then he took a deep breath and started to talk.

“I was young. I looked for danger and often I wandered around their territory. Once, it's a long time ago, I came across a bear track. It was hurt. I followed his footsteps quarter of a day. Meanwhile, the bear's footprint crossed human footprint and further they linked together. Traces were deep and uneven, as if the animal often stopped and occasionally sat down. I followed further, quickly and quietly, not losing the track. On the ground laid spear what Argosans used for hunting. I picked it up. One third was wet with blood. I tried it with my finger. Fresh! In the distance I heard the sharp and terrible roar. There was the fight occurring. The bear was starving, determined to kill. It was the right time to turn around and vanish. At that moment I heard another sound, a male scream and a little weaker woman scream.

It intrigued me, so I ran in that direction. When I came to the clearing, I saw ran in time. An elderly man was desperately trying to repel the ferocious beast with a dagger. Behind him laid a woman on the ground. Actually she was only a young girl back then. He didn’t even move. The elderly man tried to defend himself. Obviously he was becoming weak, he couldn’t last any longer. He surrendered! There was blood trickled down his chest from many wounds. The smell of the blood made the predator even more excited. At that moment I made a mature decision. Firmly I gripped my spear and ran towards them. My objective was not clearly visible at that time. After seven steps I threw the spear violently against the bear. The spear dug into his side. That was enough to get his attention. The bear immediately turned towards me. He

attacked. He caught my cheek with his paw. That's where the scar is from," he explained and talked on.

"I jumped aside. Then my foot slipped and found myself on the ground. The bear raised himself upon me. I hit my last hour there was no doubt about it. Then with his last force, the elderly man plunged a dagger into the rear of the animal. The dagger stabbed the animal in the back. The bear paused. It was enough for me to jump to my feet and pull out the dagger. I rammed it straight into his heart." Tork cleared his throat, and gently sipped water from a small bowl and continued. "I helped him bring the girl home. We treated each other's wounds. We became good friends."

I found myself listening what he was saying excitingly. He really was a fantastic storyteller. For a while I even forgot about my lack of confidence.

"The girl still hadn't woken up. Her body was shivering with a fever. She was shouting in her sleep. Early in the morning she finally fell into a deep sleep. We were placing cold cloths on her forehead. We were very tired as well, but we kept taking turns taking care of her until the morning. She woke after the sunrise. She smiled at me and my heart slowed down. From that moment I knew I would never look at another woman." He tenderly looked at his wife. She returned his look.

"They lived alone. We became real friends with her father. During the long winter evenings, we discussed all sorts of topics. We started to talk about the Teacher and Laws. Initially he reacted with anger. Later he was totally convinced by my arguments. In the spring I left. But I could not forget about the girl, her smile followed me as a nightmare. Not the first full moon passed by and I came back. I found the girl alone in the cottage. Her father was killed by a drunk, furious Agrosans when he tried to explain to them the meaning of the Laws. Later that year we got married. I brought Else to this place, where we established our home. "

"You forgot to add that four months later Ivone was born."

"Your father was often hunting and winter nights were long. Your affection was little reward for my care," noted Tork merrily. "And it paid off, Ivone looks just like you."

I watched them for a while silently, perfect couple. It's a shame that my relationship with my wife was not the same. I would have to work on it as well. After my return my life would have to change completely. I couldn't wait. I sighed heavily.

### **Chapter three**

Tork loaded sheets of dried and roasted meat into his backpack. Else brought a bowl of crab apples. The children were running around and laughing playfully. My companion was unusually quiet. His smile had disappeared from his face and sometimes it was replaced by a painful expression. He was in a state of deep concentration. His gaze met with his wife's one a few times. He nodded solemnly. The air was full of tension, even though I could not understand why. Tork sighed and stroked his wife's face. The children became silent, and ran to their father to hug him around his waist. Both daughters gently stroked him while whispering something into his ear. He turned to me and signalled me to come to him.

"Take this," he commanded, handing me a knife with a long blade. "I assume that you are not able to use a bow and arrow," he said simply.

Although I had used a bow and arrow a few times - once I even managed to shoot an apple off a tree - but I was just a little boy. With friends we used to shoot with really cool straight arrows with metal tips with really cool bows onto a still target. But to hit the target with these bows and arrows was out of the question.

I shook my head in agreement.

"Okay."

That is what he was expecting. Without any word he handed me small two sided hatchet, the thumbnail he used for chopping. He tucked another one behind his belt. Over the right shoulder he put quiver with arrows and his hunting bow on the other one. Eventually he took the backpack, once again he waved to his wife and children, and off we went.

"Tork, no silliness. You're not the youngest anymore," Else shouted after us.

Tork waved at her for the last time and he disappeared among the trees.

I guessed that it's about ten o'clock in the morning. The dew had already evaporated, there was no clouds in the sky. Today was going to be one of those hot summer days. We walked between the massive old oak trees in a narrow path. All kinds of birds were singing in the branches cheerfully. On the right side a squirrel was bouncing in the crown of the tree. We walked quietly and periodically. Sometimes we had to walk off the footpaths, because of fallen trees. It seemed that my guide strode carefree, but in his face I could see deep concentration. It looked like if he was in some mysterious connection with the surroundings. Suddenly a deer ran cross the trail. I got startled.

“That’s nothing,” he patted me encouragingly. “There is still no reason to worry. Agrosans have never dared to challenge someone in our area even if they cross a line while hunting. They are afraid of the Teacher’s power.”

The mysterious Teacher again! However, I decided to not ask Tork about him anymore. Even so, he never replied directly. And finally, soon I would get out of here and forget about everything.

We walked for at least two hours and the journey drained me a lot. I still was not completely recovered and my tired muscles protested sharply. I didn’t show any signs of tiredness and I walked behind Tork continually. The trail turned and began to soar up the hillside. We came to a small creek. Finally, we could take a rest for a while. The water from the creek was cool, but it refreshed us pleasantly. My companion took off his backpack and he sat down next to the fallen tree comfortably. With pleasure he leaned on its massive trunk. He gestured me to sit down next to him. He pulled out a few pieces of roasted meat. He gave me two ones without any word. He chewed thoughtfully for a moment and then he spoke:

"Here nearby lives my eldest daughter Ivone. We will stop by on the way. You know, we living in hamlets, don’t meet with other people very often. I visit her really rarely."

I nodded. There was a pause.

"How far is it?" I asked.

"By the evening, we will be on their territory. We will spend the night in the woods. In the morning we will head to the place where I found you."

He ate the rest of the meat and he went to drink once more. Obviously he knew this place very well. He moved here with visible confidence. Slowly he walked two, three meters, threw build-up of leaves away and uncovered the remains of an old outbreak.

"Do exactly what I'm doing!" he told me.

He pulled out a hatchet, grabbed a handful of old black ash and began to rub onto it. He was doing it slowly and carefully.

“Why are you doing this?” I asked in surprise. “This is a working tool, as well as the dagger and bow are used for hunting. From now on, we are going to use them to fight. The only reflection of the sun or moon on the blade could mean your end. The place we are going is not going be a walk in the park.”

I had already had the privilege to ascertain the veracity of his words. I nodded approvingly.

“Tork what kind of metal is this?” Inquiring, I showed the hatchet. It had a strange yellowish tinge, no way it could be iron.

“This? The merchants bring it to us from the south. Once every two winters they come to us and do business with us. They exchange it for skin, bones and antlers. They also sell salt and pepper but they are very expensive. Therefore, we must get a lot of fur ready.”

He placed his blackened hatchet beside his backpack. He took the dagger and started to blacken it in a systematic way.

“They bring ornaments for women as well. Rings with coloured stones, necklaces, different combs. Women go mad for them.”

“Where do they come from?” It didn't make sense to me.

“Down from the south. It is so hot in their country that it does not even snow. That only happens in the highest of mountains. They sail the sea on large ships and trade with various nations. They get to us through a river. Then they continue on foot and they use animals as well.” He paused.

I heard warning tones in my subconscious. The thought of transitioning through time crossed my mind again. All of this was absurd, unreal! The man acted, talked, but mostly lived a lifestyle like people from the Bronze Age. But he used a German word for sea. Something was not right but I didn't know what. The quicker I get out of here the better.

About a half hour later we were finished with everything. Weapons were thoroughly blackened, and we were quite well rested as well. We started heading up the hill. The countryside was uneventful, with tall trees and bushes. Tork was becoming more silent and more thoughtful. He didn't want to speak. He was watching surroundings closely, but inside he changed. There seemed to be something bothering him, a sort of rock mined him to the ground. In the distance I saw smoke rising above the trees. After a while I was able to see a small cottage on the hillside, exactly similar to Tork's one. On the porch stood a young woman, she was watching us closely. My friend's face lit up. As if he got a second breath. He started to move faster, smiling cheerfully. The woman waved at us, Tork waved back at her. I could hardly keep up with him.

We came closer to her by about twenty steps. Then I could look at her better. She was the exact copy of her mother, but more beautiful. Her figure was regular, slightly higher than Elsa. She had beautiful black hair and deep brown eyes. At that moment my heart broke and I couldn't take my eyes off her, I kept looking at her. I marked her as a man marks a woman. Her body was firm and lean, on her chest under the straightjacket, lightly sketched the outlines of her breasts. They were not any silicones number three, as my wife had, but they appeared much more feminine and attractive. Again I felt desire for a woman's body urgently. She noticed my

gaze and her face got red. I forced myself to stop staring at her and I politely nodded at her in greeting. Tork didn't notice it. He rushed to his daughter with open arms.

"Ivone, Ivone dear, my dove, how much I missed you," he cried fiercely.

"Me too dad!" she whispered emotionally.

"Why won't you come and see us sometime? You could even stay for the night." he asked accusingly. "Even your mother would like to see you. She is worried about you, it will be winter in a few months."

"But dad, we have talked about this many of times. Furthermore, our guest is certainly not interested." Ivone ended the matter.

She took after her mother with her assertiveness.

"Come and have something to eat. You can rest for a little while, I am sure the two of you are tired from the road."

She nodded toward the house and took her father's backpack and carried it inside. We sat down at the table. Ivone poured the soup into the bowls and placed them down in front of us. She walked quite stiffly. Suddenly the spoon fell out her hand. I jumped out of my seat and picked up the spoon from the floor and handed it to her.

"Here you go." I told looking her straight in the eyes.

"You didn't have to," she snapped and turned to her father.

I was left feeling scalded. What did I do? I had to offend her unwittingly. Certainly due to my stupid staring at her outside. Yes, that's it. I looked at Tork. He looked at me in disbelief. Then he smiled reassuringly, as if he wanted to suggest that this happens. I wanted to correct the situation somehow.

"Where is your husband?" I got it out of myself in a tight voice.

She probably didn't hear me. She didn't even turn to me, she just continued on the conversation with her father. They were discussing basic things about her mother, sisters, the Feast and etc. I felt like i was sitting on needles. It was a very awkward situation, I felt like an uninvited guest, as an intruder between father and daughter. At that moment the only thing that I wanted was to get out as soon as possible. Finally, Tork stood up.

"It's time to go!" he announced. "The food was excellent."

Ivone laughed merrily. She gently stroked her father on the shoulder.

"But Dad, you definitely say it all the time." Suddenly she got serious. "Dad, what's wrong?"

"Should something be happening?" he slung casually.

"Please, do not answer my question with a question. I thought this was a game you used to play with me when I was a kid!"

Her view turned to our weapons.

"I see that you're not going for an ordinary hunting trip. Your weapons are blackened, you came to see me and, in addition this man is not one of us."

"You're really perceptive, my girl. Do not fear about us. Tomorrow in the evening, at the latest, the day after tomorrow I will return. I will stop at yours on the way back just to make sure you are fine," he promised to her seriously.

Then he collected his weapons, picked up his bag and took off. I went after him. Briskly he walked up the trail and he didn't look back. I had no choice just to follow him. After a few steps I turned around. It was time to say goodbye.

"It was my pleasure to know you. Thank you for an excellent lunch. Do not worry, I'll look after your father."

"You talk a lot stranger," she struck me.

Well, as you want. I had intended to only be polite. It didn't matter anyway. I looked back. Tork was quite far ahead.

"Have a nice day." I shouted and ran after Tork.

Ivone was standing for a long time on the porch as looking out at them. The figures of men were disappearing in the distance. She believed in her father, he had never disappointed her. When he said he would return, he would. And what about the other man? Stranger with unusual eyes. The eyes with the colour of blue sky. She would like to see him again.

"Good luck," she wished them for the last time and returned to her duties. She had a lot of work to do.

"Well, finally!" pronounced Tork with his typical smile on his face when I caught up with him.

The path was rising into a steep hill. The vegetation changed gradually. Large oaks and beeches were replaced by shrubs and old grass. The trail disappeared in places. We were getting through further. Again, there was a silence. And anyway, Tork had been kind of strange today since the morning, I don't remember him so cagey. My hands were scratched all over from the low bushes and in addition bitten by many insects, flying everywhere we looked. My companion had to be in the same condition, but he didn't say anything. I was silent too, leaving my own thoughts drift away.

"Ivone surprised me," he spoke unexpectedly, and I flinched.

He continued and he didn't notice it.



"She has never behaved like this from the days of her childhood. Or even during the transition to adulthood."

"What do you mean?" I didn't understand.

"I know my daughter. I noticed she stiffened in your presence. Especially when you were giving her the spoon."

"I don't think so. I rather think that I'm obnoxious to her," I answered simply. So at least it seemed to me.

"I do not know, maybe you're right. I'm a little bit older and I do not understand these things. Her mother was glad when I courted her. "

"What about her husband?" I asked.

Tork frowned, his face showed huge pain. I was really sorry that I asked him. Besides, it wasn't my business. This was the thing that worried him all day long. Something wasn't right.

"He died two years ago," he began to speak. "He got high fever. In two days he died. Ivone was sad for a very long time. My poor little girl," his voice broke in deep emotion. He paused. We walked about fifty feet. We have reached the top of the hill and began to slowly descend."

"What happened then?" I followed up on our previous conversation.

Tork took a deep breath and continued:

"Ivone built a stake and burnt his body on it. Then she remained in the house for two more weeks."

I stared at him in horror. I had never heard such a terrible thing. For Tork, it was probably normal. He saw my expression.

"It's nothing unusual. That's the Laws. They guide us and protect us. Her husband died of a illness. It could be infectious. Therefore, his body had to be burned, otherwise we normally bury dead bodies into the ground. Ivone had to stay on her own for some time not to infect the others. Only when she was sure that she was healthy, she came to tell us what happened."

"That had to be awful," I shook my head.

"It was. Ivone is a strong woman. It was our first child. During her birth, Else lost a lot of blood. Later she got an infection. We thought that we will not have any more children."

We have turned from the path toward the west. The sun was setting. I calculated that in about two hours it would be sunset. Tork continued: "We educate our girls like boys till the age of ten. They learn how to use a bow, a dagger, and how to build traps. They are prepared for life. Actually, Ivone was to me a daughter and a son in one. When she grew up, her husband took her from our house. He built the house that you saw. They didn't have kids together. When he

died I suggested her to come back to us. It's normal for us but she refused. She has always been stubborn. She can take care of herself."

"And what about other men? She is so beautiful. I don't think there is anyone that would not have interest in her."

"Yeah, you know, there were many of them. From boys, who barely reached adulthood, to widowers in my age. But it seems that she is waiting for someone else."

Again we entered the forest. Familiar environment of high oaks and hornbeam improved my mood. For a moment we walked through the woods. It began to dim. We came to a small clearing. Tork stopped.

"Here we make a camp. Go to collect some firewood. But keep your eyes open. Nearby begins Agrosans territory."

I nodded. I went to collect wood. There was enough of it all over. During the thunderstorms loads of dry branches have fallen from oak trees. Some of them were thin and others thick as my thigh. I was thinking about tomorrow. When would I get back home finally, back to my life? I also started to doubt about myself. My associates would be definitely really nervous. I had been gone at least a month. I had to admit that I was quite fond of these people. Elsa's food was excellent. Even Tork's approach had to attract everyone. And their children? I didn't have any. They were wonderful. When I came back, I would have to have a serious talk with my wife.

I didn't notice but I went quite far. Confused, I was looking around. I didn't see Tork anywhere. It really began to dim. I was such an idiot! I got lost in a strange forest. The shadows lengthened. Startled, I looked around and I started to sweat. This wasn't really brave. I didn't dare to shout. Tork told me several times not to shout in unfamiliar territory. It seemed to me that I was moving in circles. Suddenly I wasn't able to move. In the last rays of the sun, a human skull grinned at me. At the same time that horrible smell hit my nose. My stomach hoisted. How come I had not felt it before. It was a terrible stench. It was not just the skull. It was a complete human carrion. The body nailed with wooden stakes to a massive oak. Partly eaten by wild animals. Rotten meat was falling off in whole chunks. The face stubbed only with one eye as if was looking right at me. But the worst thing I spotted just now. The man's penis and testicles had been cut off. These two parts of the body were squashed in his mouth. The penis stuck out from his teeth as a monstrous tongue.

It was too much for me. I opened my mouth. I wanted to shout out of my lungs, from the depths of my soul. Everything in me howled. Before I screamed, something stopped me. Tork put his hand on my shoulder. Calmly he muttered:

"I told you that Agrosans people are wild. No respect for life. Their behavior is often barbaric, but remember, you mustn't ever shout. You could draw attention to yourself by the wrong people! "

He raised his hand.

"That is where their territory begins. We must be wary," he added.

It was fully dark now. I followed Tork. I couldn't believe it. Something so terrible. A hideous murder. Oh my God, where did I get myself into? This was terrible! I was outraged and scared to the bone. I had never seen anything so brutal in my life. Here a human life had no value. What was going on here? What was this place?

We came to the camp. Tork made a low fire. He made it next to a fallen tree trunk. Almost invisible to see from far away. It was a bright night. On the sky shone billions of stars. It was quiet.

The forest was rustling lightly. Sometimes there could be heard the sounds of the night. In the distance, an owl hooted. A drowsiness surrounded me slowly. We laid next to the fire. From fatigue and exhaustion, I fell asleep fast.

*Suddenly I was at home in my living room. I was sitting in front of the TV and watching the news. In my hand I was holding a bottle of my favourite beer. Oh, this is cool. This is cool. This is how I like it. My wife walked into the living room wearing black lingerie. She was really sexy. She smiled defiantly. I really wanted her. She came close to me. She put her hand on my shoulder. Suddenly she started shaking me furiously.*

I jerked and woke up. Tork was shaking me insistently. I opened my mouth. Quickly he put his hand to cover my mouth. He shook his head.

-Silence- he signalled at me.

Something was not right. My senses sharpened. I heard the snap of a twig. Then nothing. Silence. I started to wonder if I imagined it. Then I could sense that horrible smell. The smell which I was not going to forget for the rest of my life. I imagined the wild face, vest made from bear skin. My whole body got stiff. Tork patted me gently. It reassured me. He indicated for me to lay in the shade of a fallen tree. I looked around. Tork was gone. Did he leave me here? No! I trusted him more than myself.

The Moon shone brightly. All the night sounds stopped. They were coming! On the clearing silently entered a shadow. As it grew from the ground. For a while, he remained without movement. Then he moved towards the fire.

- Tork, where are you? - I thought desperately.

He would come to the fire. If he didn't find us here he would start searching around. Surely he would find me. Horror gripped me, I almost could not breathe. He stopped again. He moved carefully and quietly. The whole time he was crouched to the ground. Five more steps and he would be next to the fire. Suddenly, another shadow rose up. Tork approached to him from behind silently, holding the blackened dagger in his hand.

The Agrosan lifted his head and listened to the night sounds. Tork made one step towards him and grabbed his chin. With a single movement he cut his throat. Through the open artery leaked his life away. Tork held him for a minute and when he sagged in his hands helplessly, he placed him on the ground gently. The blood from the opened wound sprayed a little and then it just flowed.

It all took place with the greatest of silence. Like it never happened. Tork disappeared, although a second ago he was standing above the motionless body. One out of the game. Poor consolation. How many more were there? I did not know. Soon we would find out. Something moved at my left side. From the dark bushes sailed another fighter. Slowly but surely he was moving towards me. Only ten steps were between us. There was no hope that he wouldn't notice me. With extreme care I pulled the long blackened dagger from behind my belt. It was clear that if he got to me, it would be the end.

He stopped. He listened. Nothing! He walked towards me continuously. I was all stiff. The waiting was horrible. Suddenly he looked right at me. My whole body froze and I gripped the dagger firmly. My heart was beating wildly. He had to hear it. Only five steps more. If he continued moving towards me, he was going to stand directly on my head. He was next to me. He was looking towards the fire, examining the surroundings. He was holding a bow in his hand and nocked arrow. Slightly drew the bowstring.

I firmly gripped the handle of the dagger and with a wide arched swing I stabbed him deep into his thigh. Blade sharp as a razor went through his thigh so easily and it jumped through to the other side. I brutally turned the dagger in the wound. The shadow yelled in pain, while it released the arrow. Fine buzzer sound and the arrow ended up somewhere in between the trees. He threw the bow away, now useless. He hit me hard with his fist in the face. I almost fainted, but I was still firmly gripping the handle of the dagger. I tried to rip it out but it might have got stuck in the wound. My efforts had to cause him terrible pain, yet he was still very dangerous.

He was yelling constantly. Blood was spurting from his wound. His shirt was totally wet and the handle was slippery from the blood as well. The handle of the dagger slipped out of my hand. The man jumped on one leg, but he collapsed in pain subsequently. Immediately, he sat up and pulled another arrow from the quiver. He began to grab around him. He was looking for

a bow. I did not hesitate, leapt to my feet. Pulling from behind my waist a double-edged hatchet, I ran to him. I swung heading to the head. Instinctively he raised both hands. The strike hit him with terrible force. The sharp blade cut several fingers of him. He yelled. The second strike I led with both hands. His left hand had been pushed to the head. The sharp blade continued, cut forearms and stabbed up to the handle to the temporal bone.

He was dead. I sighed and knelt to him. My hands were shaking. It was a terrible view. The clearing reminded me of a slaughterhouse. The man was laying on his side, his cut limb was laying on his breasts. You could see fingers everywhere and especially a lot of blood. I snatched the hatchet and dagger from the body and stood up.

"You're going to regret this! You are going to die slowly as my wife's lover," a hoarse voice exclaimed behind me.

Slowly I turned. He nocked an arrow. I did not have the slightest chance, he was standing just about seven steps far from me. From that distance and with the moonlight he could not miss.

- This is the end. - I thought. - Let me die like a man! -

I stood up and looked straight into his eyes.

At that moment a whistle of Tork's axe arrived. Like a black bee the blade stabbed the Argosan right between the shoulder blades. The hit knocked him to the ground. His breath was hoarse and began to cough up bloody foam from his mouth. He tried to stand up with his own strength. He tried to lift the bow but his life was leaking ultimately. The head dropped down and his body remained lifeless. His body was shaking in easy post-mortem shivers.

Tork emerged from the shadow. He snatched an axe from the lying man and wiped it on the grass. Then he did the same with his dagger. He came over to me, patted me on the shoulder and hummed soothingly:

"It wasn't a wise decision, but I have to admit, you have a lot of courage."

"I owe you my life, for the second time." I said seriously. "Why are you doing all this?"

"You'll know it, when the right time comes," he said indefinitely.

"How did you know that there are three men?" I didn't know.

"I didn't. I walked around. I saw the first two men, when you got the other one, I waited in the bushes. I used you as bait," he replied simply. So honestly, that I couldn't get angry with him. He did what was right and succeeded.

"You know how to use an axe perfectly," I looked with admiration on the third Argosan.

Tork nodded slightly. He gathered his things and it seemed that he wanted to lie down on his bed made of leaves. I looked at him in disbelief, he looked as if nothing had happened. However, on the clearing laid three disfigured bodies.

"What about them?" I asked almost inaudibly.

"Nothing. Agrosans don't bury dead people. After the death, they throw them to the wild animals in the woods. Therefore, they often rage with diseases." He laid down on the bed and rested happily. "Do not stand there uselessly, put a wood into the fire," he teased me.

I put a couple of logs, like Tork usually does it. The fire burned low.

"Come to bed. Tomorrow we have a long day."

That was a lot to handle for my stomach. How could I lie down among those dead bodies?! My companion obviously didn't mind, didn't care. O my God, please let it be tomorrow already, I need to get out of this madhouse! This was not normal. If somebody found out, I would rot in jail for the rest of my life. Even there I would've felt safer. That's what happened here, it did not make sense. Did a human life really have no value here? God help me, let me get out of here with a clear mind! I sat down and leaned against a tree trunk. For a moment the wildest things ran through my thoughts. Then tiredness won. I fell asleep ...

## **Chapter four**

The first rays of the sun woke me in the morning. I opened my eyes. Strangely enough Tork was still sleeping. I dusted off some leaves that were on my pants. I walked over to my friend. I made one step and he opened his eyes. His hand moved straight to his dagger. Nothing could really surprise him. I greeted him with a nod. He jumped to his feet, picked up his backpack and took out two slices of meat and gestured for me to join him. He offered me a slice.

"I can see that you slept well my friend," he started. "We should be in the place in about two hours."

I looked at him seriously. In his eyes was not even a grain of falsehood.

"Tork, what has happened here...actually a lot of things that have happened in the last days..." I paused.

"It's horrible, monstrous, unreal. Who are you people?" flew out of me.

“What is this all about? Shit, is it just me that is seeing all the killing? Are you all insane? What about all those murders! We can’t get away with this.” Unaware I raised my voice. “I can’t stand it anymore, I’m going to go mad!”

“Calm down,” Tork stopped me abruptly. “The Teacher warned me that it may be difficult with you. Therefore, you are receiving the necessary information gradually. If I told you the truth, you wouldn’t believe me. “

“That Teacher again, it seems to me.”

“Don’t worry you will get to know him,” he finished the debate. “It’s time to go.”

He stood up. Picked up all the weapons, placed his backpack on his shoulder and took off. I had no other choice. I followed him. We came from the place where I fought my first fight. The surroundings were familiar to me. Firmly engraved in my memory. The big lime tree that was my saviour. In its shadow were laying two shapeless masses. I knew what it was. When we came closer, we could see that they were decomposed over time. But mostly thanks to forest animal. All Just piles of clothes and some gnawed bones remained. The weapons disappeared. We went at a rapid pace. After a while we crossed a river. We continued through the forest. Suddenly the trees parted. We came to some kind of a meadow, with a black burnt out circle on it. Since then, some time had passed. There was some fresh green grass coming through the ash, but the ring was still noticeable. We came towards it.

“This is where I first saw you,” revealed Tork.

I looked around. I remember the circle. A little further was a tree that was gashed by lightning. Yes, but how did i get here? I looked to my right. I became to orientate myself. Those hills. They were the ones I used to go for a walk on. Could they be so overgrown? Wait, now I knew. I had to go left. Behind that hill is a forest path. My jeep should be parked there. If they had’t towed it away. I walked briskly towards it, absorbed by a kind of euphoria. Tork followed me slowly, as if he did not want to disturb the moment. I forgot about him entirely. I came to the hill and surprisingly stopped. It was definitely the place. Something was wrong. The forest path was gone, there was thick forest instead. Tall, at least thirty-year-old firs were touching the sky. It wasn’t possible.

“What’s going on?” I asked myself a thousand times.

I wanted to scream. Scream in anger, disappointment and helplessness.

“Tork what the hell is going on here? Where am I exactly?” I burst out at my companion. ”But tell me the truth!”

“Peter the where is not an important question, but the when is. You are in the right place but in a different time!”

“You are crazy! What are you trying to say to me?” I shouted.

Suddenly, everything began to fit together. The wild people, murder, bronze tools, no equipment. Helplessly I fell to my knees. Why me? How?

"How is this possible?" My mouth went dry.

"You went into the crystal cave, it is a journey through time."

“The crystals!”

“Yes the crystals. You activated a panel.”

“You. You were waiting for me. How did you know that I was coming?” I asked in confusion.

“The Teacher sent me. I had to protect you, in case there were problems. You did a good job at eliminating that Agrosan. I could see that you have a lot of courage. You will need it.”

“Who is this Teacher? How did he know about my arrival? Is he some sort of a prophet?” I asked directly.

“I told you that you are from the same family. Well it’s not entirely true, you are from the same time. The Teacher came through the gate many years ago. He was wounded when my ancestor found him in the forest. Later he became the Teacher for all of us. He brought us Laws.”

Tork sat down. Waving a hand, he gestured me to sit as well. I landed heavily beside him and looked at him. He spoke clearly. In his face there was no trace of a lie, just like when he announced that he used me as bait. I trusted him. He had already proved that he was trustworthy.

“Go on,” I urged him.

“His arrival is somehow connected with you, that’s why he knew about the events occurring during your arrival. But he was not quite sure. We were often discussing it. Could it affect time? We do not know the answer at this question. At your arrival there should've only been one Agrosan, at least according to the teacher. Has something changed, or did he not have the sufficient knowledge?

“You hit just in time,” I barked ironically. “It's all so unbelievable. Why did you not tell me sooner? What am I supposed to do now? How shall I live? Will I die here in this terrible time,” I exclaimed destroyed.

“Would you believe me? You are asking me what to do. In particular, don’t give up. You will see that you can survive here, you have been able to do it twice. In your time they say life is a battle, well here it is literally true.”

He was measuring me up scrutinizingly. He saw that the situation had totally exhausted me. He put his hand on my shoulder and with a kind tone, like he was my father, he spoke to me:



“Peter, everyone has their place on earth. Everyone has their limited time. It is not important where you will spend it, but how you will spend it. Your place is here now.”

He stood up.

"Now come with me. You have to get your thoughts together. The Feast of the Teacher's arrival is approaching; there you will meet him."

I stood up, too. From behind my waist I pulled out the double axe and I carefully looked at her. This would be my life from now. I turned around and walked back. When we were walking by the old lime tree again, where I had survived my first battle, something inside me shivered.

“Tork, please, could you do something for me? Can we bury these bones, they were the first people that I have killed. It will be definite goodbye to my old life.”

Tork nodded seriously. Since we had no tools, we had to dig with our axes and daggers. We dug a shallow grave. There was no need to dig deeper, the bones were gnawed completely. It was improbable that some wild animals would be lured to them.

I wasn't burying just them. This was a grave that represent where my previous life ended. From my coat pocket, I pulled out my wallet. I slowly opened it. Driver's license, identification card, credit cards, cash and a photo of my wife. I hesitated. She was beautiful, but empty. I would never see her again, it's gone, I placed my wallet on the bones. Tork and I quickly finished filling the grave. I cut off a small tree. I chopped off some of the branches to make it look like a cross and hammered it into the ground.

"Rest in peace." I said a short prayer. My companion looked at me with approval.

We walked through a shady forest. For a while, we were walking without a word, drown in deep thoughts. I had my head full of worries. What's going to happen to me? So far I had been under the protective wings of my friend. How long? Feeding of one more hungry throat was not easy in this world. Else also blamed him, that he wasn't at home very often. He went hunting more often. And what about this mysterious Teacher? I should meet him soon. We were joined by an invisible bond. His arrival had something to do with me. Too many questions. In one thing he was right. If he said me this earlier, I wouldn't have believed him. It was just so impossible that even now there was a possibility that it's just one big illusion. But I do not even believe myself. Actually I had suspected it for some time subconsciously. We had already stayed longer than it was necessary. We had to hurry, it was afternoon already. There was a long way still to go. Luckily we continued along the path without any other problems.

Later in the afternoon we arrived at Ivone's cottage. She was just outside. She had a little smokehouse not far from the house. In it she smoked the leg of a deer. When she saw us, she

smiled and waved at us cheerfully. She wiped her hands in a piece of canvas. She ran to her father and hugged him dearly.

"Welcome Dad, I'm really glad to see you again."

Tork touched her tenderly on the cheek.

"My little dove, did I ever fail to fulfil something I've promised?"

He was a mystery to me. He loved his family unconditionally. He was gentle and kind to them, smiling all the time. Despite he argued with Else, sometimes he knew when to stop to avoid an argument. The children often hung over his shoulders and pulled his beard. He never raised a hand against them. It was enough to raise his voice, they had a natural respect in front of him. It seemed that he had a special feeling for Ivone. He was sorry that she was alone, without a man. He was also proud of her. She was able to take care of herself. It was a certificate of his education. At the same time, he was a man of his time. He could hunt a deer and face to a wolf or to a bear. He did not hesitate to kill a person, if it was necessary. Yet he was undoubtedly intelligent and often used modern words for a natural phenomenon. Certainly influence of the mysterious Teacher. His speech was clear and prudent. It confused me from the beginning. If he did behave like a savage and a fool, I would have figured out what the truth is. He lived a simple life without water and eclectic energy, but in my time people were proclaiming to return to nature as well. They also lived like Tork. The truth is that even if he would have explained to me before, I would hardly believe him. I had to see on myself.

"I'm glad to see you," murmured Ivone awkwardly.

She spoke to me, but I was deeply immersed in my thoughts to reply her. I mumbled something and I ignored her. Even in this time, this behaviour was not acceptable to a host. But she didn't say a word.

We walked into the house. The roast smelled lovely and also tasted excellent. We sat at the table. Mechanically I chewed bites. Father and daughter were talking about common issues. The conversation revolved around the mother, siblings and preparations for the Feast. The younger sister should be carried over the threshold of adulthood. It was an exciting family event. It meant that the child become an adult. Whereas they did not meet too often, the Feast was an opportunity for young people to get to know each other. This concerned the people living in hamlets particularly. Those who lived in small villages, were doing a little bit better. The young girls were looking for boys, who in the future could become their husbands. The older girls formed first serious acquaintance. It was a huge event. We went to sleep. The fire already fizzled. It wasn't needful, it was a nice warm night. Murmur of the wind in the trees felt reassuring. Although I had a head full of worries, fatigue won.

In the morning we said goodbye to Ivone. I registered that her hair was pinned and combed more beautiful than the last time but I didn't pay any attention to it. I nodded at her briefly. Father and daughter hugged each other for the last time and we walked back to the Tork's house.

The days went by fast. The fresh air and exercise are the best remedy for the troubled soul. I had to learn a lot. To learn that I was able to not only survive, but actually live. But I had one advantage – an excellent teacher. Tork explained me everything promptly, if I needed to explain more times he repeated. He described, even drew many things I didn't understand. He often said that I had to try it by myself. It's better to experience one time than to hear hundred times. He took me to hunt with him, learned me to read traces, explore the habits of animals. In addition, he devoted me into secrets how to handle a bow, dagger, spear and double axe. The double ax gave me a hard time, often didn't fall on the side of a blade. I even broke the wooden handle twice. I started to worry.

It came by itself. Arrows began to shoot the target, the axe found its own way to a certain place, the dagger has become a part of my extended hand. Even my body overcame the great changes. The hands got stronger, I had visible tendons and veiny arms, palms hard as a rock. And my condition has improved considerably. I could walk all day in the woods and I did not feel tired. The brisk mountain air did miracles to me. I totally forgot that cigarettes ever existed in my life. My previous life vanished from my head completely. I looked straight ahead. Each person had a place on Earth. Mine was here.

On that day the sun was shining. I woke up to a bright morning. Like my family - I was not ashamed to call them so - I always got up with the sunrise. When I came out, on the grass there was dew. My morning ritual was washing in the creek. Behind me I heard the shouting and screaming of children. For the oldest, Elke, it was the last time in her childhood. Soon she would become an adult on the Feast and leave home. It seemed that her parents were not sad at all. It was natural.

The wind brought a lonely shriek. Immediately I was alert. I gently stroked a dagger behind my belt, I didn't go without it anywhere. The next shriek was heard much closer. A sharp whistle replied at it. At that moment about a four-year-old, beautiful deer ran out on our clearing. A wolf ran in his tracks. I pulled out my dagger.

"Hold on Peter," shouted Tork.

He surprised me. A few meters away from us was a wolf, and he did nothing. He didn't pull out a bow or dagger, he was just watching it with interest. The wolf chased the deer to the house.

It didn't have anywhere to go. He turned and faced to the wolf with courage. It bowed his antlers, pointing to the enemy. Warningly he snorted and stomped its hoof.

Then, from the trees flew a heavy spear. The golden tip shone in the sunlight. It broke into the deer's body behind his shoulder. It went through the heart and slid out smoothly. The deer froze. It fell on his front legs, and then collapsed to the ground. For a while he twitched, then he stiffened. The wolf ran up to him. It sniffed the deer, licked the blood from its wound, then he lifted his head and howled. The chill went through my body.

"Greetings, Grey Wolf," exclaimed Tork. "I'm glad to see you."

A tall man walked from the forest. He muttered to Tork something in greeting. He put his whistle to his mouth and whistled. The wolf obediently ran to his master, and sat down at his feet. The man lightly scratched his head and walked to us. The wolf followed him without any hesitation.

The man was truly impressive. He seemed even taller than me. In these region it was not normal. Strong, firm body was an indication of great strength. He was dressed like Tork. However, similarities between the two men ended there. The man had fair hair falling loosely the his shoulders. His face was smooth, just shaved. In contrast to my host he had an angry look. His intelligent blue eyes stared from under his light eyelashes almost angrily. This man glowed with a strange restlessness. I could feel it. He truly aroused fear.

"I am happy to see you too Tork," he greeted.

"Good morning, Else," he nodded in greeting to her too. "I guess you never get old. You're as beautiful as ever."

Else blushed.

"Really beautiful piece." Tork interjected into the conversation. "Are you coming from afar?"  
“

The Grey Wolf shook his head. He stepped to a deer and with a single movement he snatched a spear from the body. He truly had amazing power. He pulled a handful of grass and cleaned his spear. He bent down to the deer. From behind his waist he pulled out a dagger and stabbed the deer in the abdomen. With rapid movement he opened the chest. He cut out the heart of the deer and threw it to the wolf. It howled, grabbed the heart into his mouth and run away.

"I killed him in front of your house. Let me dedicate its skin and antlers to your daughter, Else. I heard that this year's ceremony is very important for her," he spoke quietly.

He turned to Elsa. "You are the most famous cook in the whole area. Please accept the meat of the deer as a gift."

"Okay," she agreed, "you're invited for lunch at our place. Of course, if you meant what you said."

"That's the stranger, right?" he asked Tork.

"Yes," he replied. The man nodded seriously and disappeared in the woods."

"Who was that?" I asked Tork.

I helped him skinning the deer, it was really beautiful. The king of the forest.

"The Grey Wolf," he answered. "He lives alone and without a woman. He avoids people."

"He looks scary," I added.

"No. It's only externally. He has never hurt anybody. It's a long story, maybe one day I will tell you."

"I think you can say it right now. Thanks to him we have enough meat for a few days. You don't have to hunt. I'm listening," I didn't want to let it be.

"All right," he agreed.

"I will tell you the story from the beginning. He was not always called The Grey Wolf. His father gave him name Erik. Surely you've noticed that he is different than us. He is the son of the Teacher. His mother died while giving birth, he was unusually large for a new-born. His father raised him alone. After he reached adulthood, somehow he didn't want to start a family. Until he was twenty, when one girl won his heart. They met at the Feast. She just reached the age of adulthood, they fell in love. The wedding was a couple weeks later. He took her to their new home."

Tork just finished skinning. For a while he sat down and signed me to do the same. Then he continued.

"They had a son, his name was Erik, after his father. However, he called him Smiley. It was a beautiful boy and his father loved him unconditionally. He lived the best times of his life. Something happened that wasn't expected. That year there was a severe winter, the food supplies were running low and animals perished from hunger and cold in the forest. The time went by, the last food supplies were gone. Erik tried to catch something. Neither the traps brought any benefit. If he caught something, predators managed to eat it before he gets to them. That day things seemed to be a little better. The snow stopped falling, the sky had cleared, it was actually quite a nice day. Erik went hunting. He was tracing a deer for hours. Finally, he killed him. He cut out big pieces of meat, the rest he buried under the snow. He made a mark, with intention to return. When he came home, his heart stopped."

He paused. His face was full of pain. Like he experienced the situation by himself. After a while, he continued: "Outside the door, there was redness of blood on the snow. The child was

nowhere. He came outside. He noticed wolf tracks in snow. They dragged the little body through the snow in the mouth." He swallowed hard. He took a deep breath and continued.

"Pieces of his wife's body were all over the place, there wasn't the only unbiten chunk. They took all their hunger out on her. He found no trace after the child. They had to take him with them. Erik looked up to the sky and yelled horribly. He yelled out all his despair. He gathered the remains of his wife and brought them home. In the centre of his kitchen he dug a grave. A very deep grave. He placed the remains into it and her favourite items as well. Her hairbrush, jewellery and all the baby clothes. Then he took all his weapons. His bow and arrow, a lot of arrows. He followed the tracks of the pack. He mercilessly chased them, killing them one by one. He ate wolf meat only. That lasted a week until there was only one wolf left. It was the experienced leader of the pack. He spent long days following his tracks, he didn't give it a break. He did not let it hunt or eat. Finally, they met for their final battle. Erik nurtured this huge hatred towards the wolves. Day after day he was becoming a wolf that was more dangerous and wild than the wolves themselves."

I was touched and horrified at the same time. I understood the pain in his face now. It was cruel.

"They met on the clearing," he continued, "the wolf was exhausted and starved. It couldn't run, it didn't even want to. It waited. Here was the place where their faith would be decided. When it saw him coming, it growled. Erik stopped. They were looking at each other for a moment. The hunter threw his bow into the snow. Then he did the same with the other weapons. He wanted to kill it with his bare hands. He did it. When it was over, he cut its heart out. Wounded, he sat down in the snow and wept."

Tork paused. He stared into the distance.

"Even that didn't give him the satisfaction. All those months he nurtured his own hatred. He really believed that when he would kill the last wolf from the damned pack his hatred would be relieved. But his heart was in the hands of the demons and that is why he continued killing. That is the way it went on for a year. He mercilessly chased every wolf that he came across. Until one day he killed a young she-wolf. A few days later he came across her burrow. There were five pups in it. They were dead. They died from hunger and the cold. Then he noticed that one of them was still alive. He wanted to kill it at first but then he stopped himself. Something snapped in him and realized how wrong he has been all along. What happened to him, was fate. He brought the pup with him and took care of him until he was grown. He became his friend. Then he returned home where he stayed for two days. He realized that nothing would be the same anymore. This home should be their happiness but it became a cemetery. Everything

reminded him of his family. He set the house on fire and left and never looked back. His soul died when he found his wife's body. Since then he has lived alone. He avoids people. There will never be a smile on his face anymore. Just his faithful wolf that walks by his side everywhere he goes. People started calling him The Grey Wolf.”

"Do you think that he will get out of it?" I asked.

"Time is a powerful cure for many diseases. I don't know, his heart is deeply hurt. I hope so, he is a good guy. The best one that I know, till that event we used to visit each other very often. We have known each other since childhood and I hope that one day the demons will leave his soul!"

I listened with interest. It was a very sad story. I felt sorry for Erik.

"Enough talk, we have a lot of work to do!" We carved the pieces of deer, Tork cut slices for drying. Some of the pieces he put away for today's lunch. The rest of the meat we prepared for smoking. He used hazelnuts and cherry wood, the smoked meat smelled great.

Just before lunch the Grey Wolf arrived. He nodded and he even bowed to Else. From behind his back he pulled a small container with a flower in it. Her eyes shone. Her flower garden was her pride.

Then he patted the both girls' heads, the older one got a hair clip and the younger one got a dagger with a handle that was made of antlers. We went to the table. The lunch was excellent as usual, Else outdid herself again. After lunch we enjoyed a bowl of herbal tea. Its fragrance spread throughout the kitchen. Erik was sitting next to Tork. First, they talked about the weather and gradually the conversation turned into hunting. They ended with the Feast. The Grey Wolf visited people rarely but he never missed a Feast.

"I talked to your dad," pronounced Tork slowly.

"How is he?" asked Erik silently.

"He misses you, you haven't visited him for a long time. It will be a year this Feast."

"I know, I miss him, too. Maybe I will visit him sometime."

"He is worried about you, the only son. His only child."

"I also had a son. And a woman," Erik replied darkly, "but to father, the great Teacher," he added with a hint of irony, "I cannot forget that ..." he paused.

Then his face relaxed.

"It has been a long time ago. The memory is beginning to fade. Leaving only emptiness."

"So why don't you choose another woman at the Feast?" asked Tork.

"I'm too old to start a new family. I don't know If I am going to live as long as my father. And then, I'm afraid too. Tork, my friend, it almost killed me what happened the last time.

When I found her out there in the snow, I thought that my heart stopped. No one can heal such hurt. The anger kept me alive. That terrible hate drove me forward. I don't want to experience anything like that again. I would not be able to leave the house and leave my family at home alone again. I would never have a piece of mind again.”

Erik stayed with us until the evening. They were talking about their youth and their life they had spent together with Tork. Intentionally, they didn't mention his dead family anymore. In the evening the Grey Wolf said goodbye. He disappeared in the rays of the setting sun with his wolf by his side.

## **Chapter five**

The next morning a strange sound woke me up, from afar I heard a dark rumbling drum. Tork also pulled a drum from somewhere. It was carved from the trunk of an oak, covered with a deer's stomach. When the sounds of the forest fell silent, he answered. He looked very focused and drummed again. I noticed that some of the sounds repeated.

He listened again. The expression on his face was a cheerful smile. He called Else. She came out. She held in her hand a partridge which she was just plucking.

"What is it? I have a lot of work to do," she snapped slight angrily.

"Trudy, the daughter of my brother, is getting married."

"When?" she asked, obviously excited.

"In three days, from today.”

Else's mood improved. She was happy that they were going somewhere to visit. It didn't happen often. The most excited were the children. They were talking cheerfully and they were running around the house. In particular, Elke was very happy. She reached adulthood and it was expected that she would get married soon, too. I was tense, too. I did not know if I should go with them. I suggested to my friend subtly.

"Peter, of course, that you are coming with us. It will be a great honour for my brother. “

"Are you serious?" I asked uncertainly.

"You know, there is not a lot happening here. Your arrival has become the number one event," he assured me.

I was quite happy, I didn't know a lot about people around here. Of course, except Tork, his family and Erik.



"Will the Teacher be there, too?" I wanted to know.

"Unfortunately not," he replied.

"That's a pity," I was disappointed. "I longed to meet him."

"Do not worry. You'll see him at the Feast, everything has its time. Everything that you are going to learn until then, will be very handy in the future," he assured me.

Two days had passed peacefully, but the weather got worse. It was raining all the time. No one wanted to hang outside. As the rain fell on the southern side, Tork covered holes in the wall serving as windows. He explained to me that in winter they completely sealed the windows with fur and ready timber. The room is then warm but dark. Everyone is happy when the weather allows them to go outside.

The next day I wasn't able to stay inside. I was in the house like a tiger in a cage. I got used to spending my time outdoors. Tork teased me, but I saw that he was grumpy too from forced inactivity. Finally, he went to the crate in the corner where he had stored tools and equipment. He pulled out skin fold in a triangle. Gently he placed it on the table.

"Peter, could you uncover one of the windows." he asked me. "The one on the north side," he pointed at it.

I did as he said. From this side, it did not rain, the room came alive a little. Although there wasn't too much light, it even got colder noticeably, it was better than nothing. Tork was unpacking the skin with automatically. It was finely trimmed. He unfolded it on the table. There were small items on it. My eyes widened when I saw that there laid artfully carved chess figurines on the table.

"Are you going to play?" he called me to the table.

"Do you know how to play chess?" I couldn't believe it.

"It's a favourite game of the Teacher," he smiled. "He taught my grandfather as well. He says that it clears the head and teaches a person how to plan."

He lowered his voice and looked at his wife secretly. But she didn't pay attention to us.

"I don't play often by myself and Else is not very good at it. She always gets angry. Sometimes she is so angry that she is not accessible to coitus. "

I walked over to the table. Carefully I checked it out. The skin was actually finely trimmed and there was artfully drawn chessboard on it. Figurines, they were stunning, thoroughly cut out of antlers. All the characters had distinctive faces, even the shooter had a little bow with nocked arrow in it. The rider was not sitting on a horse, but on a erect deer on his hind hooves.

The King was impressive, at least two centimetres higher than the other pieces. The authority shone of him. In contrast, the Queen had fine features, very similar to Else.

"That's wonderful," I exclaimed in amazement. "I didn't expect anything like this. I am sure it took you a long time to do it."

"It's nothing special," Tork answered with a touch of pride. "I spent just a couple of those rainy days doing it," he added carelessly.

I sat down at the table. My friend began to lay the figurines on the chessboard. I grabbed the Knight. But then my attention was attracted by letters and numbers along the edge of the chessboard. It was really a shock. My opponent noticed my face expression. He looked at me questioningly. I pointed at the letters silently.

"These are letters. We call them a magical mark. Even those the teacher brought to us, twenty-five characters used for writing and ten for numbers. The Laws are written with them," he explained. But when he saw my surprised expression, he continued:

"Our children are well prepared for life, surely I have mentioned it before and you will see it for yourself. Even girls are as educated as boys until the age of twelve, they all know how to do a men's work. Hunting, using weapons and building traps and so on. When they reach the age of twelve, they get educated by the teacher. They will spend one year with him. He teaches them the magic characters, numbers, basic knowledge of geography and astronomy. Simply they learn something extra."

One of the chess pieces fell on the floor. He bent down under the table looking for it in the dark. He finally found it. He triumphantly sat up with a smile from ear to ear.

"You wouldn't use letters much here, most kids just forget it, as soon as they leave."

"Some of them," he added significantly, "stay at the Teacher longer. Like me. I stayed four years. He says he has never had a better student. After I left him, I used to visit him quite often. We used to hold long debates about the origin of the world, the origin of humanity, life and the future." He looked in my eyes. "Sometimes I envy you. Life in your time must be amazing. This amount of knowledge, the possibilities," he sighed in excitement. Suddenly he recovered and lowered his voice.

"The Teacher told me about God. About his son, who sacrificed himself for the world. Also he talked about other religions. What can bigotry do. About subjugating the forces of nature and terrible wars. Sometimes it seems to me that human knowledge is endless. I feel terribly small."

"Why didn't you stay with the Teacher?" I wanted to know.

"A restless spirit drove me forward. I was looking for danger. I often spent entire days on Agrosans' territory. It intoxicated me more as a forbidden drink. It's in each of us. Teacher mentioned that in your world there are people who voluntarily risk their lives. It's called ... wait, until I remember, oh extreme sports. So you see, it's not just specialty of us, the ancient primitives. And you know the rest of the story. I met Else."

He remained a mystery to me. He was a hard man of his time. Skilled hunter, a ruthless warrior, a loving father and husband, but also a philosopher and a man who wanted to know more.

We started to play the game. He offered me to go first. It was an interesting game. He was pretty good player. Even I wasn't that bad. Overall, he won more games than me. He was great strategist. The day was slowly coming to an end. When we weren't able to see the chess pieces, we decided to play the last winning game or the winner takes it all. Finally, with some problems, I beat him. It made me feel happy. Else and the kids were looking at the two of us all the time. While Else was on her husband's side, the children obviously not. Especially Elke couldn't let her eyes of me. I pretended that I didn't see it.

Tork stood up. He stretched his hand to me. It also surprised me. This gesture was not used here. I squeezed his hand tightly.

"Thank you, it was a great game," I thanked friendly. "Especially when I won," I smiled.

"Thank you, too. I haven't played such a enjoyable game in a long time. I often used to play with Erik-Grey Wolf. I hope we'll get back to it one day. And in one thing you are right. It is not important how many times you lose, you always have to stand up and move on. Remember that. "

It was quite dark now. I wished a good night to everyone. Tork sealed the windows. We went to sleep. On the way to bed I tripped over him.

"Sometimes I imagine what it would be like to have electricity. It must be wonderful," he noted again and wished me good night again.

Early in the morning the rain had stopped. The sun was shining. Another nice day ahead. It was about time. Tomorrow we were supposed to go to Tork's brother. The whole morning was marked with preparations. Else was cleaning clothes. Elke was helping her skilfully. Certainly she would be a good woman. Tork was purifying weapons. He thoroughly cleaned them from dirt. He began to sharpen them precisely on a sharpening stone. In fact, he preferred to sharp weapons in the evening. Always they had to be in perfect condition. But now he was sharpening them gently, almost tenderly. It gave him a dignified expression. Nevertheless, it was a big

event. Else finished cleaning the dresses. Together with Elke they began to clean a large amount of bronze ornaments. With excitement they were discussing which ones would be the best. Lastly, they started to try them on. Then the youngest girl joined them as well.

Tork looked at them with a mixture of love and pride. When he saw the youngest daughter with a comb in her hair, a tear gleamed in his eyes. He was getting old. He was thirty-five years old. Nice age. His father had died before he was thirty. Daughters were growing up. Soon they would leave them. His task would be completed. His genes would survive. They would be given from one generation to the other. One day, his descendants would fly to the stars. Yes, everyone had their place.

I was watching the situation with interest.

Women were chatting cheerfully. They were evaluating different jewellery and the different hairstyles. When Elke noticed I was looking in their direction, she blushed. Quickly she turned with her back to me. After a little while I noticed she disappeared. I let it go, I was more worried that even though I was invited to the wedding, I didn't have a gift for the young couple. I wouldn't be able to make one in one day anyways. Then I got a wonderful idea. My watch. In this time practically useless.

I am a stranger here and everyone expected something special from me. My Rolex watch was the best that I could give to them. There was a dedication engraved on the watch, but that was just a minor detail. It read: *To my friend Peter from Mark.*

So I had a gift now.

In my exhilarating mood I decided to go for a walk. I walked through the old forest. Low undergrowth almost reached my knees. Then I spotted an island of fern. I checked the mesh of the plant. Two of them were untouched, but I discovered a pool of blood on the third one with a fox's leg. I admired her courage. Who knows if I would've been able to keep going. Probably not. What was more, I didn't think Tork would either. I returned to the house. I told Tork what I saw. He left without a word. After a moment he returned with a beautiful cock pheasant under his arm. He really never ceased to amaze me.

The rest of the day was running in elated atmosphere. We went to bed at sunrise. Tomorrow would be an exciting day for me.

I woke up to the sound of bickering children. The sun was barely up. The sisters were wildly fighting over one clip until Else ended the argument. She took away the clip and put it back to the rest of them. The sisters gave each other a dirty look. After a while, however, they forgot about the argument and looked forward to the upcoming events. Tork took down a beautiful

bear fur off the wall while Else arranged a big basket with slices of cooked and smoked meat. Then she added some pears, apples and dried coral berries. Then she then placed a bag of dried mushrooms on the top.

We were ready. The gifts were prepared. We left in the morning. The trip passed in bright spirit. The good mood infected us all. Tork's brother lived about a two-hour journey away from us. His house was very similar to his brother's one but maybe a bit bigger. He had four kids, Trudy was the youngest one. We came nearer to the house and Tork's brother came to greet us.

"Welcome to my house. Else, you look graceful as usual," he spoke in greeting.

Then he turned to me.

"Welcome, stranger. It is a great honour to meet you."

We went inside. His daughter greeted us, too. You could see she was nervous. She was making lunch. Today was her big day.

Gradually, more guests started arriving. Else was helping her sister in law with the preparations of the upcoming celebration. There was a table in the shade outside, prepared for lunch. The table was covered with various dishes. Different types of meat prepared in many ways. Sausages, blood sausage, even brawn. There was also some fruit and salads. The most of all I was surprised, when I saw bread. I had been at Tork's for some time, but I had never seen any bread or pastries overall. Where did they get the flour? I had to ask my friend as soon as possible. People started to meet. About 20 people came and they greeted each other jokingly and seriously. Men discussed women, weather, and hunting. Women in return discussed men, the house and children. And the children? They were running cheerfully around the clearing. They were glad they had met.

From the forest came the rhythmic sound of drums. It was joined by a horn and a deep, lonely tone of whistles. You could hear a easy rhythmic melody. From among the trees emerged a small crowd. In the front walked a solemnly dressed young man. He was fully armed, walked with his head up. He was tall, well built in my opinion, but still a boy. He was no more than 15 years old. His parents were walking by his side. They were followed by musicians and the rest of the crowd. The closer they came, the tune changed from brisk to slow pacing. A majestic horn was sounded. Trudy came out of the house with her parents. They stopped about ten steps from the house. Everyone silenced and watched the situation tensely. The crowd stopped and the young man with his parents separated from them and approached the bride. They stopped about two steps in front of her. The music fell silent. The young man took off his deer fur from his back and placed it in front of the girl. He knelt on one knee and started to speak.

"I, Olrik, the son of Togrid, I ask you to become my wife. I swear on my name and my life that I'll protect you, care of you and our children!" he uttered solemnly.

"I accept your offer. I swear on my name and my life that I will take care of you, as well as our children and I will be a good wife to you," she replied.

She walked over to him and knelt beside him on the skin. Now it was time for the father of the bride. He put his right hand on the shoulder of the bride.

"I give you my daughter. Let her stand by you for all her days. Let her give you strong kids and let her be a good wife to you."

Then he put his left hand on the shoulder of the groom.

"From now on you are my son." he paused and solemnly justified, "You're my blood."

The bride and groom stood up. Everyone started to shout and scream. music began to play cheerfully and some of them even joined in the singing.

The married couple entered the house. The bride offered lunch to the bridegroom. It was a signal to begin a feast. The mood was great, several couples began to dance. They were simple dances based on circling around and tapping. Occasionally someone screamed.

Gradually the visitors were coming into the house giving gifts to the married couple. Mostly practical gifts. From craft tools to weapons. From the bridegroom's parents they got a big jug of grain. When I gave my gift to the groom his eyes shone. No one ever had received a gift like this. I undone my wrist watch and placed it on the groom's hand. He thanked me with dignity. I could see he was pleased. Otherwise, they got things which they truly needed. After the wedding, the couple would live in the bride's home for about two months while their self-built house was under construction. Once the house was complete he would take his newly wed there. Tork told me that was not always the case. If the father of the bride did not accept the groom as a son in law, the couple left right away after the wedding. They slept in the open air, while the man built their house. It happened only occasionally.

The feast went on merrily. Several men came to meet me together with their wives and children. I went to the table for something to taste. Unexpectedly, I met Ivone.

"Hi Ivone."

"Greetings Peter. I'm glad to see you again," she smiled frankly.

I looked at her in surprise. Did she mean it or was it just a social quip?

"Beautiful celebration," I changed the subject in confusion, "those two are really suited for each other."

"Oh yes, you're right. Do you have a wife?" "She asked suddenly.

“I do. Well, actually I don’t, it’s all complicated. She is a part of my old life.” I tried to explain in confusion.

I felt like a fifteen-year-old boy on his first date. I didn’t know what to think. Few local people were familiar with my origin, but I automatically assumed that Tork’s daughter did as well. Otherwise some fantastic stories circulated around about where I came from. After discussing with Tork we came up with an easy explanation. After some time, my story would become less interesting and everyone would just accept me as a stranger.

“I’m sorry about your husband. I apologize if I said anything inappropriate the last time.”

“It’s fine. It was a long time ago. We were together only a short time. I miss him but a lot of time has passed now that’s why I don’t trouble myself anymore.”

We remained silent for a moment. Both of us didn’t know what to say. The silence became awkward.

“Would you like to dance?” I asked her.

“Why not, I would love to,” she smiled.

She really did have a beautiful smile, it made me dizzy.

“You know,” I admitted, “I don’t really know how to dance.”

“Don’t worry, I will lead,” she encouraged me.

We joined the others, the music was rhythmic. At first I was panicking a little bit and I felt embarrassed. Then the music grabbed me. We spun around each other. Some time together, sometime apart. Ivone was beautiful. Her hair flew. Eyes shone brightly and she laughed cheerfully. She made my pulse quicken.

I was totally blown away. Everything disappeared, there was only the two of us. Rhythm suddenly began to accelerate. The rhythm was still wild. It was awesome.

Then the music died down, the musicians went for something to eat. I lost Ivone somewhere. I was looking around. I spotted Tork. He was in a great mood as well. Entertained with his friends in a huddle, he was just describing to them as I killed off the first Agrosan. Everyone listened with interest, only here and there someone nodded in agreement. When I approached, Tork cheerfully embraced me.

“Peter, Peter, I didn’t know you were such a great dancer,” he teased me good-naturedly.

“Do you think?” I could feel heat rising in me.

“I’m glad Ivone is having fun,” he whispered very quietly.

“Actually it is true that you made me happy. Oh there’s my little dove... “

Ivone stood aside and was talking with her mother. When she saw me looking at her, she nodded at me. I sent her a cheerful wave. She parted from her mother and came to me.

“Hey dancer,” she teased me. “You did great.”

“Thank you. I had a lot of fun.”

“You really are a special guest here. The women are only talking about you.”

I looked at her in wonder.

“What is so special about me?” I asked her.

“Everything,” she answered. “You are a stranger, you are tall with white hair. Women are interested in what they can’t see as well,” she lowered her voice and conspiratorially winked at me.

“They say your cock is big and hard as a horn of a wild bull,” she laughed.

I felt scalded. I stared at her in disbelief and then laughed, too.

“What else do they say?” I continued in the game.

“That it is dangerous to make love with you. Supposedly, when you go wild, you definitely can pierce through a woman.”

“Not if you know how to use it.” I added fuel to the fire. “Do you think there would be the one courageous enough to try it?”

She started to burn up. She tried to say something in confusion. I hope I didn’t overdo it. I didn’t say it to puzzle her. The truth was I really liked her. But that was not all, something attracted me to her. It wasn’t just her firm body, but there was something that emanated from her face. Her independence. Her rigidity.

The fun continued. They brought out several jugs from the house. They contained some dense cider with small alcohol content. They poured them into deep bowls. It had a sweet and sour taste. I let two bowls fill up and brought one to Ivone. We talked while we were both drinking. It began to get dark. At the direction of the bride's father, boys burned bonfires. There were three of them, spaced out to light up the whole clearing in front of the house. The music started again. Melodies were rhythmic and wild. Again, my heart started pumping. I do not know whether it was the music, Ivone, or the weak alcohol, but it was fine. We danced long into the night. The boys kept adding into the fires. The fun continued to the fullest. Some of the young couples disappeared quietly.

Night was almost ending when the music died down and from the house they brought out amounts of fur. The wedding guests all sat down on the ground. The night was warm and pleasant. Me and Ivone sat beside each other. We watched the stars and talked in a low voice. I did not know how we fell asleep. I woke in the morning to a child’s laugh. I opened my eyes and the sun was up for a while. I looked around. The clearing was littered with dormant people. Ivone slept snuggled up to me. I was watching her silently. Her face was calm and had an



angelic feel. Her hair loosely falling on her shoulders, chest heaving regularly. Beautiful indeed. I felt a rush of tenderness, I suddenly longed to hug her. As if she sensed my thoughts, she opened her eyes. Sheepishly she smiled at me and adjusted her hair.

“It was a lovely night.” I murmured.

“Yes it was. It has been a while since I had so much fun. You know, I want to tell you that...,” she didn’t finish.

The drums started again. People were waking up. Everyone went up to say goodbye. The young married couple thanked everyone for all their gifts. I lost Ivone again in all the fuss. As if on purpose. I couldn’t find her anywhere, after while I gave up.

We were walking back home. All the time Tork was talking very cheerfully. He discussed the wedding with Else. They discussed gifts that everyone brought, who and what the women were wearing, their jewellery. Simply everything. I only listened half the time. My thoughts kept in the clearing.

Ivone. Ivone messed my head up. What about her? Or did Tork say that after her husband’s death she wouldn’t have given another man a chance? What about my feelings? Was it just the infatuation with the weak wine, the dancing and the light of the fire? Or was it a desperate cry of my loneliness? All these thoughts running through my head made the journey faster. We came home in the morning. There was no cooking today. Tork said that after every celebration you should let the body breathe. The yesterday one was really hard for our stomachs. Else noticed my melancholy and tried to cheer me up. It didn’t help. In the afternoon I took the hard two-sided axe. Until dusk, I was fighting with wood. At night I wearily fell into bed. I fell asleep straight away.

## **Chapter six**

I started the next day in a bad mood. I was not enjoying anything. My hands were sore from working with an ax yesterday. For a while I wandered aimlessly around the house. Tork was watching me in worry, and he gave up his attempts to lift my spirits. The morning was dragging very slowly, I could not stand it. I took a bow which Tork gave me as a gift and I slipped the ax and dagger behind my belt. After a little hesitation I took a heavy spear and walked into the forest.

I walked among the trees. Saturated greenery worked blissfully on my senses. Gentle buzz of leaves and birds singing was reassuring me. Not far from me a woodpecker knocked. I looked up. It climbed up the root of the tree, where there he stopped and knocked. Its red hood flickered in incredible speed. Suddenly it pulled out a fat maggot and flew away happily.

I proceeded further. I was heading towards the creek, there was a small swimming hole where the forest animals went to drink. They trampled several paths out. The road didn't take me more than half an hour of a leisurely walk. There was a pleasant shade. There were many various tracks on the ground. Some were older, others quite fresh. Tork has devoted a lot of his time in teaching me the secrets of reading tracks. I was still no champion, but I knew a bit. There were traces of foxes. They were older, no more than two hours. The most striking was a track of a wild swine. It was a boar - a loner. So this is the right opponent to my mood. Its track was not older than one hour. He is not getting away. I went after him.

After a few minutes I came across a tree with a scratched bark. Here the boar rubbed the side of his body. According to the depth of the track and the high place, it had to be a nice piece. Sometimes the male stopped and threw pieces of land with his snout. He dug up roots and small animals. He had to go this way about ten minutes ago. In his track laid a few pieces of dung. It was fresh. He can't be far away. I slowed down carefully following the trail. The wind blew from aside. Not exactly ideal, but it was enough. Now I walked very slowly.

From my right side I heard an oink. Walking silently, I looked out from behind a tree.

There it was.

Under the tree laid a dead body of some animal. The wild boar hosted on it. But he was still quite far away. I walked around him in a semicircle, but when the wind blew into my forehead, I turned to it. I didn't take my eyes off it.

I was approaching to it step by step. Absolutely in silence. It did not notice me, it continued to calmly feed itself. I approached to it by about five meters. I moved slightly to the left, so that it was by my side. Now I had a great view. Really a perfect piece. It was about four years old. Large body covered with sparse black hair, one tusk broken off. Certainly a ferocious fighter.

I hesitated a little. Was it not a little bit too much for me? Maybe so, but I did not want to walk away. I firmly gripped the spear. A moment of concentration.

- You must hit the heart - Tork insisted always.

I quietly stepped out from behind a tree. With all my power I threw the spear. With a swish it surpassed a short distance and stabbed deep into the male's side. However, it didn't hit the heart. The boar furiously whined. In the blink of a second, he turned to me, only one look in his bloody eyes and I knew what's going to happen immediately. The boar furiously whined again

and ran to me. There was no time! I took out a double axe from behind the belt. Violently I threw it against the running pile of meat. It stuck into his monstrous snout. The blood spurted. He shook his head so furiously that the axe flew away. While running the handle of the spear broke off.

It was injured, maybe fatally but for now it was still a dangerous adversary. I jumped behind a tree. He ran around me like a whirlwind. When it noticed that I fooled him, it started looking for me. The forest was filled with his furious breath. The spear hit his lungs which made him sound very wheezy. How long would it take until he died? That I didn't know. I had to go by my initiative. I pulled out my dagger very carefully so I would not make any noise. Huddled up behind the tree I waited for it. After a moment it showed up. Blood trickled from his snout. The wheezing sounds reminded me of the sounds of a teapot.

It ran to me. Head down to the ground, ready to kill. It flew like the wind. At the last minute, I jumped. When it saw that he missed, it stopped suddenly and turned to me. A wound above his right shoulder slowed him down a bit.

That was my moment. I yelled out at the top of my lungs and jumped on it. My hundred and ninety pounds shocked it. It fell to the ground and I brutally stabbed a dagger into it. The blade smoothly entered the body. I ripped it out, and I stabbed him two more times and quickly jumped to my feet. The boar was exhausted. Even it tried to stand up onto his feet, but wasn't able to. It fell to the ground. Its body shivered for the last time. Then silence. I won.

My heart was still beating wildly. Adrenalin coursing through my blood vessels, I almost wanted to roar. Yes, this was the perfect cure for sadness. It was only me and him. The winner and the loser. I raised my chest.

"Hope you don't crack," spoke a dry voice behind me.

I turned around. I was a bit embarrassed but it did not affect my euphoria.

"Greetings, Grey Wolf. What are you doing in these area?" I asked amicably.

"I was tracking a lynx. It would be a perfect wedding gift for my friend's daughter. I heard the roar of the boar and curiosity brought me here."

He stepped to the body.

"Tork is a bigger fool than I thought. He sent you hunting a wild boar by yourself. Its utter madness."

For the first time ever I could see a sign of a smile even though it did not belong there. It disappeared very quickly.

"But you tore him apart properly. With a spear you have to practice more," he reprimanded me.

"I don't know how I could miss it," I stuttered incoherently.

The Grey Wolf walked up to me. With an interest he was looking at the laying body.

"This is an outstanding piece. Tork is a good teacher." He paused and then added: "And you're a good student."

A praise from a gloomy man felt better than anything else. I knelt to the animal. Close up, even after death he looked intimidating. Dead eyes were staring into the sky, squashy bloody mouth didn't bode well. I opened his chest. I took out his guts. It took a while, but eventually I discovered the tip of the spear. It went through the right lung. He wouldn't have lived for long. I must make a new spear as soon as possible. With a fast movement I took out the heart. It was torn apart because of two stabs of the dagger passed through. I grabbed it and threw it toward the Wolf. It fell about three feet from him. He did not move, he was staring right at me. He growled warningly. It was not easy to please him.

"You can," Erik ordered shortly.

The wolf grabbed the torn heart and scurried away. Erik helped me to cut the boar. We worked fast but still were not finished until late noon. Chunks of the meat we took with us, the rest we hid under long branches, and the top of the branches we covered with stones. At least we protected the meat somehow from wild animals. The next day I would go back with Tork.

At the house we arrived in the late evening. The Grey Wolf said a short goodbye and disappeared into the forest with his faithful friend. Tork stared at the pieces of meat wonderingly. I had to tell him the whole story. Everyone was listening, Else lamented and the daughters looked at me in admiration. Tork was nodding while I was speaking. When I start talking about how I missed with the spear, he became nervous and he murmured:

"That could cost you your life."

But then he did not interrupt me until the end. I could see that he was experiencing the story with me. When I finished, even the women were breathless.

"That was brave," he praised me. "But remember, next time you must not miss. You should rather wait until it dies alone. Climb a tree or something like that," he sinned me.

However, I saw that he didn't mean it. The teacher's pride won.

"You know, it sounds like something I would do as well," he added eagerly.

Else rolled eyes up.

"It had to be a wonderful hunting. It is a shame that I was not there. Tomorrow we will go for the rest. There are some dried ashes behind the house, your job is to build a new shaft. In particular, you have to practice a lot."

That is how he finished the conversation. It got a bit late, so we went to sleep. In the morning I woke up in high spirit. Immediately after the morning washing up in the creek, we went with Tork for the rest of the meat. I had a good feeling. For the first time, I hunted alone and secured enough meat to for next days. By noon we managed to process the meat. Some of it we used for sausages and the rest we cut for smoking and drying.

In the afternoon I built the new shaft. The work came easily to me but took a lot of effort. I kept watching Tork to figure out how to do it. We finished in two hours. The spear was rightly balanced when I felt the weight in my hand. I picked out a target on a practice object that Tork managed to make for me. I was satisfied. I managed to make a weapon and hunt an animal. I was very happy with life. I would never give up! I came over to the javelin and pulled it out of the target and violently threw him against another target. Before it hit the target I threw my axe. The dagger followed it. About two seconds later they all flew to the target like bees.

“You are making some great progress. I’m very proud of you,” nodded Tork. Pride was heard in his voice.

“Thank you, my friend. You are a great teacher.”

“It won’t last much longer. There will be a time when you will have to teach yourself and even learn from your mistakes,” he finished. “Now take care of your weapons,” he ordered decisively.

"Yes sir," I saluted with a laugh.

“At ease!” he surprised me.

His knowledge of history showed his admiration for the future. I thoroughly cleaned my weapons. The sun went down, the next day was ending. What would tomorrow bring?

The next day didn’t bring anything. The euphoria had left me since this morning. Nothing exciting was happening and I was in a bad mood again. I was walking around spiritless and with no interest for anything. Even yesterday’s success said nothing to me today. In the afternoon I started working on a bench. I used Tork’s tools and made a thick sturdy bench to sit on. With a hoe I cultivated space on the porch. The bench fit in quite nicely. I sat down on it and stared into the distance. There was a rock that looked like a tusk of a boar. Tork sat next to me. We were both silent for a moment and we were just sitting quietly. I was not in the mood to chat, and my companion did not know how to start. Finally, he sighed and spoke.

“Peter I have been watching you lately. You are walking around in no mood and with no interest. What is going on?”

“Tork I... I don’t know, too. Everything seems to be getting on top of me. I’m lost in another time not being able to survive alone. I feel useless.”

“You are not useless. Some writer from your time said: No man is an island. And affect at other people, too. In good or in bad. Do not give up. You still don’t know what awaits you. The teacher has been waiting for you for hundred and thirty years. We have waited for you together. Your arrival has a meaning.”

“What could my meaning be?”

“Do not worry, everything will come at the right time. But I tell you one thing. The Teacher told me that you will help me to get rid of a big sorrow of mine.”

“What sorrow?” I exclaimed in surprise.

“That he did not want to tell me, he did not want to interfere.” He smiled encouragingly.

“I wish it would happen. I feel terrible and especially when you have to take care of me. How long more will I be a nuisance?” I blurted out.

“You will know. You are like a young bird. When your wings will be strong enough, you will fly away from the nest.”

“Where would I go? I don’t even have a house or a woman!” I exclaimed fiercely.

“Ah so that is it. Why didn’t I realize sooner? You are missing a woman, or you have already picked one out?” he teased me.

"Does it matter? How could I succeed with a woman? After all, I do not know your habits and even your language still gives me troubles."

"Peter, calm down. There are some situations in life," he interrupted me with amusement, "when a different language really is not a barrier. Speaking of women, the affection between man and woman is given by nature, since the beginning of mankind. Listen to your heart, it will lead you in the right direction. And then, I do not think that a female character has changed so much over the time. They always have been, are and will always be happy to be courted. A fine compliment often counts more than a precious gift," he told me.

"I think you are right, Tork. Thank you for your advice. "

We fell silent. A small bird landed on the ground, grabbed a splinter in his beak and flew away. A light breeze was blowing.

"Tork, I want to ask you something. If it is uncomfortable for you, you don't have to talk about it."

"Ask, my friend," he encouraged me.

"Has it been a long time since Ivone lost her husband?"

I was afraid that he would get angry. I knew that it was a very sensitive topic for him. And indeed, his face grew sad. But he answered with a firm, level voice.

"It's been three winters, since my brave girl has been living alone. But I think I have already mentioned it to you. However, you had head full of other things," he added.

"Why did she never get married?" I asked anxiously.

"No one won her heart. She has always been self-sufficient and independent. She is a good daughter. I'm proud of her. She wouldn't get married just for to be treated by someone. That man has to be special," he noted dreamily. He loved his daughter.

"Do you think I'm special?" I managed to say silently.

Tork looked up wonderingly. He measured me slowly. Suddenly his face cleared.

"So that's the way things are. Else told me that you were looking great together on the Feast and you would make a lovely couple." He scratched his head.

"Do you think that I could win her affection?" I asked directly. "Please, don't spare my feelings."

"So that is why you have changed suddenly. You were hit, how do you call in your time? By Cupid's arrow. How pertinent! Well my friend, so this you will have to solve alone. I wish you good luck. "

He stood up and was going to leave. Then he turned and looked at me straight.

„I would like to accept you as a son. “He added and left.

I stayed alone. I wasn't a bit wiser. In one thing he was right, I had to solve it by myself. Yes, and I will not delay it. The sooner the better, I wanted to know where I stand. I got up. Now!

I prepared everything what I needed. Weapons, some food and I took off. The path was familiar to me, I went quickly. I even noticed that Else was watching me. She waved to me. I didn't look back anymore. I was watching the path significantly. In addition, I was alert to the surrounding, nothing can't be neglected. All sounds, all traces. I merged with the forest, I became a part of it. Like hundreds of other animals. I progressed quickly and I indulged only one short rest.

The sun swung into the second half of its path. In the shadow of the forest there was pleasant atmosphere. High old trees impeded the growth of the wort and so I was able to progress quite easily. The path went by fast. Finally, in the distance I spotted a small cottage. The smoke was rising from the chimney.

Ivone was outside. She was plucking vegetables from a small garden with a high fence. Uncertainty grabbed me. What would I say?

She heard my footsteps and turned around.

"Ivone..." I started.

I could not find the words. She was beautiful. I could feel ringing in my ears. The world has narrowed. Her face filled the whole horizon. Everything else was lost.

"Peter!" she exclaimed.

Any doubts that I had melted away. The expression in her eyes said it all. She came to me. We passionately embraced. Followed by gentle touches. She put her head on my shoulder.

"Peter," she whispered in a low voice. "Where have you been? Where have you been so long?"

"You know, I did not know ... it took me a long while before ... Ivone, I don't know."

I got out of myself incoherently. The whole time we were standing there, I kept holding her and sniffing the scent of her hair. I could feel her heart beating in her chest. For some time, we froze in our embrace. Then she took my hand and led me inside to the bedroom. I turned her around and kissed her gently. Slowly with my tongue I encouraged her to widen her lips. It surprised her at first, but she started to kiss me back. Passion came to life between us and we started to take off our clothes. She lied down on the bed and I followed her. The love making was beautiful. Completely filled me with joy. Ivone was experienced and quite insatiable. For three years her body had been denying her femininity which was now fighting its way out. We were completely enchanted with the passion. We were losing ourselves in each other.

We were laying side by side. Her head was on my chest. Lovemaking was passionate and exhausted us completely. I felt very happy. Ivone gently stroked a hand over my chest. She was singing quietly. She stopped and raised her head to me.

"Where have you been so long?" she asked with an indignation. "Why did you let me wait for so long?"

I smiled at her. Her beauty took my breath away.

"I had other duties. For example, boar hunting, and the like."

"I know. The Grey Wolf stopped by here. He told me everything. You have no idea how my heart was pounding."

I looked at her seriously.

"Sweetheart, I could not to stop thinking of you. At the wedding you messed my head completely.

"And I was still thinking of you, too and wanted you to come. At the same time, I was afraid."

"Why?" I did not understand it.



"I'm scared of losing you, that your time will pull you back. And then, you said, you have a wife."

She pronounced it with jealousy.

"That is true. I have never felt loved her. I love you and always will." I promised in confident.

"Peter, at our first meeting, I did not like you at all. You seemed to me so cocky. At the wedding it showed that you are different. I love you, too. "

I looked at her. Yes, this was the woman for life. For my whole life. Finally, all made sense. She had tears in her eyes.

"How was a wild bull horn?" I suggested to ease the situation.

I cheered her up a bit. She smiled.

"You," she laughed, "You're just the same as all men. I see that it will never change. You all just want to be praised."

She stopped laughing.

"Peter that was the most beautiful love making that I have experienced. I didn't realize it could be so beautiful," she added seriously.

"It was beautiful for me as well, sweetheart," I answered back. "I love you" I gently stroked her and wiped the forming tears in her eyes. She answered back with a smile.

"But that's not all! After work, you deserve a good lunch," she laughed again.

"Alright, lady of mine, what are we having today?" I started authoritatively. "But I hope it will not be burnt like the last time."

"You!!!" She slapped me on my bare belly. "I did not have it finished yet and you interrupted me!" she added.

She stood up. With pleasure I watched her slim body. She dressed quickly.

"Please stay in bed," she asked me. "I just want you to look at me."

She walked over to the stove. She moved with a straightforward manner. Sometimes she looked at me and smiled. Less than a half hour later lunch was ready. She came over to me.

"My man, it's lunchtime. Hope you will like it," she noted nervously.

Again I felt a little tenderness, and something else. Excitement. When she came to me, I grabbed her hand and pulled her to me. I kissed her passionately.

"Now I have a craving for something different." I revealed.

"Like what?" she asked playfully.

She knew exactly what I meant. Her face flushed a little with excitement, her breath shortened.

"You, my strawberry," I whispered.

Again, we immersed in the heat of passion. This time we made love slowly. I wanted to explore every bit of her body. Orgasm struck her by strength of a storm. Her whole body started to tremble. She panted brokenly. At that time the wave hit me as well. We have merged into one, joined forever.

For a while we were lying satisfied to the depth of our souls. It was very enjoyable. I wished that it would never end. I felt peace all over my body, suddenly it seemed to me that I can cope with anything, I didn't want to break and I never wanted to give up. With this woman by my side I was able to pluck the stones with my bare hands. This was my place. Forever and ever.

Meanwhile the lunch had cooled down, but it was excellent. Ivone was a good cook like her mother. We ate roast meat flavoured with spices and baked apples. After lunch teatime came. The scent of wild berries filled the room. Meanwhile it started to get darker while the evening was becoming closer. The shadows started to lengthen. There was about two hours left until the sunset.

“Do you think your father won't be worried about me?” I spoke.

“Certainly not. Even though he likes to laugh a lot, he is a very responsible person. He would not let you into the forest by yourself if he didn't think you were ready.” she responded.

“Do you think so? I still have a lot to learn.” I doubted.

I took this situation very seriously. There was still a lot of things that I didn't know and things that I still didn't understand.

“Me too,” she followed. “People learn whole lifetime. Don't forget that I am my father's daughter and I can teach you many things. However, there are things you have to learn for yourself, even at the cost of your own mistakes.”

“Ivone, my sweetheart, you are right. You know, today was a long day. A lot has happened, believe me that I will never forget about it.”

We sat together until night. We talked about our lives. I told her about my job, my wife, and my love to nature. I also told her about how I travelled through time, and how her father helped me at a decisive moment. Then she talked about her childhood, her husband and his death. She also talked about how she fell in love with me. Then Ivone fell silent. I could tell she wanted to tell me something but she didn't have the courage. Finally, she took a deep breath and spoke.

“Peter, I have to tell you something. We haven't had kids with my husband. We lived together for two years and nothing. I think that I cannot have kids. I have to tell you this, I want you to know everything about me. I can't lie to you.”

It jabbed me in the heart. I was looking for the right words to say. I didn't know what to say.

"Ivone, darling, you don't know that for sure. Do not worry about that. And even if, I will love you no matter what. Forever." I promised firmly.

She was quite satisfied by my answer, but still she was not completely certain. She looked at me flatly and asked me.

"Are you serious?"

"Yes, more serious than anything ever before!" I exclaimed fiercely.

I knelt before her and spoke.

"I, Peter, ask you to become my wife. I swear on my name and my life that I will protect you and take care of you and our children if we are blessed."

Tears glittered in her eyes. One rolled down her cheek, then the second, third and finally the entire stream. She struggled with tears and eventually she gave in. I was touched and distraught at the same time. When she calmed down, she caressed me on the face and spoke, with a solemn voice: "I accept your offer. I promise on my name and my life that I will take care of you, as well as our children and I will be a good wife to you. I will love you for the rest of my life," she declared firmly. Then she added quietly: "In a way that I have not loved anyone before."

We hugged. It was completely dark now. Time to go to sleep. The night was full of lovemaking, and sleep overpowered us early in the morning. I was falling asleep with a feeling of absolute happiness. Ivone snuggled up to me and I enjoyed her warmth. We were covered with finely drawn up chamois leather. Sleep captivated us while we were talking.

"Wake up, lovebirds!" Someone knocked on the door with an iron fist.

In a second I was up on my feet and reflexively I grabbed the double-edged axe which laid next to the bed. Even Ivone woke up.

"The sun is up for a long time and you are still sleeping," called a voice outside.

Then I recognized him. My faithful friend and protector.

"Greetings, Tork. Please wait for a little while." I answered, putting on my shirt and pants.

Even Ivone dressed promptly. Before she got to the door, I hugged her around her waist, turned her to me and kissed her passionately.

"Good morning, darling." I winked at her.

She opened the door. She greeted her father and hugged him briefly. I nodded at Tork in greeting.

"Could I have nice bowl of tea by any chance?" he asked with his unmistakable smile.

Ivone nodded and went to make tea. I came out on to the porch. The sun had come up a long time ago. It could be just before noon. From the West the dark clouds rushed. The wind blew.

That couldn't be any good. And yet this man came to make sure that I was fine. I was grateful. "Peter, when I said you to spread your wings and fly out of the nest, I didn't mean to do it right now," he laughed.

"So you see, everything has its time." I replied. "What are you doing here Tork?"

"Else was worried about you. You know, women," he stared into the sky. "Even I was curious myself. I'm sorry that I broke in here," he apologized quickly.

"You know, my friend, when I heard that bang, I thought a bear ran out of the forest. Luckily, I recognized you. Otherwise, your skin would be hanging on the wall."

We both laughed. We laughed until Tork slapped his thighs.

"So a bear supposedly! The skin on the wall!" he shouted so loud that you could hear him a hundred yards away.

Ivone came out of the house and looked at us wonderingly. The laughter was contagious. In a moment she was laughing with us. In a good mood, we sat down at the table and enjoyed the peace.

Tork waited until the afternoon. We saw that he felt happy and didn't want to leave. However, as time progressed, he stood up to leave.

"I have to go, because Else will think I met another woman," he smiled cheerfully. "I hope you will not mistake me with a bear."

Again he laughed so loud that you could hear the echo through the clearing. We said our goodbyes. He turned around one last time.

"Come and see us," he winked at us and disappeared into the woods.

I hugged Ivone around her shoulders. We looked at the place, where Tork disappeared. Afterwards we went inside.

"Well darling, do you think it's time to eat something?" I asked, because my stomach started to growl.

"Wait a minute honey. I will heat yesterday's meat," she replied, and went into the house.

I used the free time to explore the surroundings. I found where the tools and equipment were. It was time to do something. I took the heavy double axe and started to grind it thoroughly. Then I could get to work. Till Ivone called for lunch, on the yard I managed to chop up a decent pile of wood. I took a few logs into the kitchen.

I woke up in the morning with the sunrise and prepared tea. It caused a smile on Ivone's face. She showed me the house. There were two rooms and a hallway. The hallway mainly served in the winter, the cold wouldn't come in into the house. A larger room consisted of a kitchen, dining room and bedroom. The smaller room contained stocks. In the corner there was

a chest with tools. The house had two windows. Through them was blowing a gentle breeze. There were number of animal skins. It amazed me.

"Why are you piling up so much fur?" I asked Ivone.

"These are for exchange. Every two years, merchants come to us from the south.

They bring salt, pepper, corn, weapons and various other things. "

"When are they coming again?" It intrigued me.

"This autumn. Therefore, I have so many of it," she replied.

"You're really a good hunter, darling."

She opened the chest. There were products made from bronze. Axes, knives, arrowheads, spears, shovels and etc.

"These things are very expensive. And then even ornaments. Most men like to buy them for women." She looked at me significantly.

Those women, they will never change!

The tour continued for about an hour. I looked around the house and I had to admit that the house was built in a good location. It stood on a slight hill. About fifty feet from the house, a small stream flowed. The clearing was cut around the house. From this place was a beautiful view of the forests. In the distance, there was the silver ribbon of the Steep river. It was a beautiful place. I would like to spend the rest of my life here.

Tork was walking through the woods with a head full of ideas. Ivone, his daughter. He loved her the most among his children. Even if the Teacher said parents must love all their children equally, it was not true. The human always preferred some of them. He had worried about her destiny for a long time. She had lost her husband shortly after the wedding. They didn't have kids together. She did not give up. She refused to return to the parental home and was able to take care of herself. He brought her up well. Again he felt proud. She was a strong woman, but even so he worried about her. He saw that she missed a man in her life, the loneliness was killing her.

Even when her house was or was not on his way home, he always stopped by. He pretended that he was happy but inside he wanted to cry. And now? Finally, she found a man who was able to win her heart. The teacher told him that Peter would help him to get rid of his great grief. When he saw Ivone's face this morning, everything was clear. They found love in each other. He was so happy that he wanted to scream. Ivone, his little girl finally threw away her sadness. And she chose well. His family would be enriched with new genes. Else had seen it already at the wedding, when they were together. He was looking forward to telling her everything.

The attack surprised him. Although he was an experienced hunter, he had a mind so shaded that the impending threat had gone without notice. The old wolf attacked him with all the strength that was left in him. He was chased out by his wolf pack. All the days he spent wandering through the woods. He was injured, weak, and could not keep up to catch something. Then he could sense the smell of his eternal enemy - humans. Any other time he would of ran away, but this time the situation was different. He had no other choice. He had to attack. The hunger brought him to insanity. The smell of the human was stronger, he was getting closer. The wolf crouched down next to the road and waited.

When Tork got closer, the wolf jumped on him, his terrible fangs were aiming straight to his carotid artery. He wanted to kill. Tork moved at the last second. Although he was surprised by the attack, he was still a very skilled hunter and warrior. At the moment that the wolf jumped, Tork raised his hand and with the other one, he pulled out a double ax. The wolf fell with the full force onto his hand and they fell to the ground. The two were wrestling on the ground, while Tork tried to keep the wolf's mouth away from his neck. The wolf was growling furiously the whole time. The wolf bit and shook Tork's arm. Blood oozed from his mouth. When the wolf smelt and tasted the blood it brought him into total insanity. Tork bent his knee, with his left hand he pulled out a dagger and stabbed the wolf straight into the heart. He turned the dagger so the blood has a way out. The menacing wolf howled and then fell silent. He died.

Tork managed to get up on his feet. He looked at the wolf then at his hand. It was rightly ruined. He pulled a piece of cloth from his pocket that was used for this purpose and bandaged his hand. He clenched his teeth. Every touch to the injured limb caused him great amount of pain. He looked at the wolf again. He was big but old. His skin was injured from a previous battle.

"Nobody pays me much for you. Maybe at least a bag of salt," he hissed through clenched teeth.

Suddenly he slumped down to the ground. The loss of blood exhausted him and he started to lose consciousness.

"No, no!" he cried.

He stood up with the last of his strength. It could last about half an hour to get home, but in this state definitely longer.

Else would know what to do, he just had to get there!

The distance seemed endless, the path went by slowly. After a moment he thought he could hear the howling of wolves. It seemed like the trees were falling, and the path was narrowing.

"Else, Else." Voice was roaring in his head.

The world was cast into a single vivid picture. All around him he could hear growls, then followed by a high pitch ringing noise in his ears.

"I must go, I must go on!"

He wasn't going to surrender. He could see the house now in the distance. In reality it was only 10 meters away. He was getting closer. Else appeared in the doorway. He had to calm her down. He must tell her about Ivone.

"I hunted down a wolf, I must go back for his fur later," he gasped with a smile and lost consciousness.

When Else saw Tork, she was stunned from the shock. He walked falteringly at the clearing in front of the house. He was unarmed and completely disoriented. He pressed the to the body and the blood was soaking through the canvas. He saw her and babbled something incomprehensibly. When he fell down, she did not hesitate. She shouted at the kids. She knew what to do, there was no time to panic or for tears. She grabbed him under the arms and dragged him to the house. Elke rushed to help her to get him to bed. She checked his pulse, his heart was beating wildly. She got things ready for the treatment. She unwrapped the wound and with an experienced eye she assessed it. She saw teeth marks. Long wounds from the canine teeth looked like dagger cuts.

She could handle it. She pulled out a jug with stopper and opened it. The strong smell of alcohol blew her over. She washed the wound with it. Tork sighed, the burning wound brought him to consciousness. Only for a minute. Else pulled bronze needle and a strong thread from a thin leather case. She poured alcohol into a bowl and put them there. She let them soak for a while. Then skilfully she sewed up the wound. Finally, she cleaned it with alcohol again. She covered the wound with a clean bandage. Everything went fast, so he didn't lose too much blood.

Although he was unconscious, his breathing was regular, and heart calmed down. They had experienced it several times. Tork was strong, surely he would get out of it soon. Once again she checked everything. Alright. She sat next to him on the bed and cried.

The whole night she was sitting by her husbands bed wide awake. Once he asked for some water, otherwise he was still asleep. Now it was up to him. His body fought its battle.

In the morning he opened his eyes. Else, from tiredness and stress, fell asleep next to him. She awoke, startled from a dream. He touched her gently.

"Could I have something to drink," he asked quietly when she opened her eyes.

In confusion she stared at her husband. Then she sighed with relief and hugged him strongly.

"Aah!" he hissed in pain. "Please, be a bit concerned of an injured old hunter." he teased.

She got up, made a cup of tea and brought it to him. She called the children, they came in and also hugged him. He tried not to show weakness in front of them, but Else sensed it and sent them away.

"You scared me, you old bear!" she rebuked him immediately. "Don't do this to me and don't forget that you are not young anymore."

Injured man laughed, as much as his weakness permitted him to.

"You're the second person who called me a bear. I think I really must be one." he smiled cheerfully, and told her all about Ivone and Peter.

When he was speaking about his daughter's happy face, Else gently grabbed his good arm and patted it.

"I suspected it. When I saw them together. And then when he walked around as if he lost his soul. I am glad that Ivone will have someone she can rely on. I hope at least the same as me," she whispered tenderly.

They talked in confidence, then he embraced her firmly with his good hand. They drank tea together. When Tork sat down, he got a bit dizzy but he was out of the worst. He was still very weak and lost too much blood. His hand was twitching. It's nothing, it would get better. It's important that he was alive. Else was a real support. She did a brilliant job. He hoped he didn't scare her too much. He joked all the time to loosen a tense atmosphere.

"I hope you sewed it up nicely. You know how squeamish I am about the wound on my face," he teased lightly.

"Oh, dear, don't you know that I am very good at sewing? It does not matter if it's deerskin, or your skin," she replied brusquely.

"That's enough! You have to relax. I'll cook something light for lunch, something that gives you strength."

She ended the conversation and went to cook. Tork fell on the bed wearily. Yes, he needed rest. He fell asleep soon.

## **Chapter seven**

Since morning I had lot of work to do. I had lived here for a week. I was already pretty decently familiar with the environment. I used to go hunting. There were quite a lot of animals. About two hundred meters down from the house was a beaver dam. This had led me to several



ideas. However, these I had to leave for later. Now I had to worry about other things. Since the morning, I was making traps. Ivone liked birds. I have found that hitting a bird with an arrow was nearly impossible when you didn't have enough experience. There lived pheasants and quails abundantly. Ivone knew how to prepare pheasant perfectly.

I arranged the traps. During a quick lunch, I informed Ivone of my plans. I planned to build a latrine next to the house. It would stand at the back of the house, also I wanted to lead out the water from the stream, which would carry the leftovers away.

That was a tough one, because the stream was located about twenty meters away. Also it was necessary to build some kind of barrier and slow down the flow of the stream. I did not have any water pipes. I could dig up a trench, the flow had to be sufficient to sweep away all the leftovers safely. Another problem was, where would be the content drained. About thirty meters below the house was a steep escarpment, it would be a satisfactory solution. I looked at the tools. I would need a narrow shovel and something similar to a pick axe. This would require a lot of effort. Still, I was thrilled, it would be something amazing. Ivone would certainly be excited, although she did not yet fully understand what my point was. Immediately in the afternoon I started to work. The soil was rocky here, but fortunately after about five meters the stones shrunk. The work went fast. By the evening I dug out about ten meters' hole. Enough for today.

I went to check on the traps. In one of them I caught a rabbit. He was obviously exhausted from a vain fight to try and get out of it. I came closer. It was a large female. At first glance it was obvious that she was pregnant. I felt sorry for her, so I decided to let her go. What was the best way to approach her? She was caught by her back leg. When I came closer, she started to move rapidly. She tried to bite me. I thought for a moment. I undressed my coat and threw it on her which restrained her. I placed my hand under her and released the trap. I wanted to lift my coat and let her go but then I got an idea. I brought her home with me. Ivone was getting rid of all the weeds in her small garden. I called at her. She stopped her work, washed her hands in a bucket and dried them. I folded up a bit of the coat. She shrieked in surprise, when the female rabbit moved.

"Peter, it is alive!" she screamed.

"Yes, isn't it amazing?" I answered enthusiastically. "Come with me, we have to look for some place where we put her for the night."

Finally we found a larger box. There were ornaments made of bronze, combs and other female things. It took me almost an hour until I convinced Ivone to empty it. Outside, I picked a few handfuls of an old grass. I padded a box with it. Then I added some fresh grass and leaves.

I let a doe gently inside of the box. I quickly enclosed the grid, which I had constructed for this purpose. She was trying to escape. Finally, she got tired and remained motionless in a squat, only occasionally she swung ears sharply. I left her so she could get used to the new place.

Ivone still did not understand why I took her chest. With a mouth full and a good humor, I started to explaining.

"Honey, this female rabbit is pregnant and soon she will have her babies. Rabbits are at the bottom of the food chain. This means that they will quickly multiply and grow rapidly. Moreover, it is a herbivore. There won't be a problem to breed them. In winter it will be a little harder, but I think we can handle it." With hope I looked at her and waited for her response.

"Well, I hope you know what you're doing," she sighed resignedly.

I hugged her, gently picked her up and twirled her around the kitchen. She screamed with joy. We went to sleep. I couldn't wait until the morning.

The first rays of the sun woke me up. Immediately I ran to check Clara, like I named her. Obviously she was still nervous, but not as much as yesterday. I was pleased in particular that there was bit less of grass. She started to eat, it was a good sign. I walked out. I had to wait until the dew dries. If she would eat the damp grass, she would get bloated and die.

I went back into the house. Ivone was baking some pancakes and making some tea. You could tell she was in good humour by looking at her. We only used the flour occasionally, as you could only get it from buyers from the south. Then you had to mill the flour on a hand mill. It was strenuous work, I would have to figure something out for that too. We were eating. Then Ivone went to clean the furs, while I took off down to the stream.

In the evening it was time to resolve other significant things. I was inspired by a large vessel in the storehouse.

"Ivone, please would you be able to tell me where you got those jugs from?"

I had to find out. If they came from merchants, there was nothing I could do. I will have to carve gutters from wood. Their lives are not comparable to hot ceramic ovens.

"Three hours away from here lives a Potter. He produces these vessels, and other things," she replied.

Of course right after that, she wanted to know what my plan was. I explained it to her, I would place stones from the stream into the dug up channel and about four meters from the latrine, I would put down clay pipes. They would lead to the toilet. The bottom would be inserted with stones, and the drainage would be going from the tubes. On the inlet I would make a latch, and when released the water that was in the pipes, it would discharge everything away.

“That is a lot of work Peter. It will take a long time and the tubes, as they are called, will be expensive.” Ivone commented.

I had to calm her down. The problem was that I had many plans. A flushing toilet was just the beginning, the other ideas are much more adventurous.

"Do not worry, baby, we can do it." I calmed her.

I finally convinced her. In the evening I insured her approval with passionate lovemaking.

I was digging the channel for a week and another five days I was gathering the appropriate stones. It was very easy to get the tubes after all. The Potter was pleased to see me. He offered that he would do half of the work without pay, for the second half he wanted the shiny buttons off my shirt. He didn't know how pleased I was. I made it look like it was against my will. Then we started doing some tough bargaining. Finally, he reduced it down to two. With a sad expression on my face, I pulled them off and gave them to him. But in my mind, I cheered. Meanwhile, after the consultation with the Potter, the plan changed. It consisted of a sort of a tank with a flap where one tube entered. After pulling the leather strap it would release the water from the tank which would flow through the other pipe at the bottom of the toilet and it would take the waste away. It would flow out into the escarpment.

I had to admit that Potter had done his job superbly. He made exactly what I expected from him, all according to my imagination. After burning, the tubes remained pretty hard and red. The tank could have capacity of about fifty liters. He even helped me to carry them, because he was curious for what I wanted to use this oddity. He shook his head wonderingly, he had never seen anything like this. Well, what could you expect from a stranger?

I was working diligently even the next days. In doing so, I did not neglect even my woman and her farm. It was represented by my female rabbit Clara. Ivone was seeing how the work continued, she was mostly happy about the price of the pipes. She stopped worrying so much. Clara started making her nest, it was only about time that she would be delivering her babies. I had to make rabbit houses. I was planning on making a small room where they would be placed for the winter, connected with a small hayloft. There the rebuilding of the attic in my plans, too. That would come later, when I finished building the latrine. For the rest of the work, I would need some help, I might ask Tork. I found it strange that my friend had not come to visit me for some time.

The construction of the latrine took me a total of three weeks. Ivone was happy that I was finished. She felt neglected, but when she used the latrine for the first time she could not believe it.

“Peter, this is amazing,” she cried out proudly.

I had to explain to her in detail, how it worked.

Dinner took place in a joyful spirit. Hand in hand, we went to check Clara. The rabbit was peacefully laying on its side. She became used to her surroundings. I was a little worried that she might kill her young ones, when they were born. We would see.

Clara had her babies two days later. There were eight of them. All of them had no fur and were a pink colour. Their eyes were still closed. Ivone was moved, so was I. The best time to start on the construction of the rabbit houses.

“Ivone, let’s go visit your parents,” I suggested.

To be honest, I hadn't seen them in a long time until now and I was starting to miss Tork’s humour. Not only that, I needed Tork’s help as well.

“I was thinking about that, too,” she nodded seriously, and her face grew sad. “You know he has not showed up in a month now and that is not like him.”

“You are right. In the heat of the work I didn’t notice.”

“I’m worried about my father, Peter. He is not young anymore,” she added sadly.

Her eyes went moist. Although she was independent and self-sufficient, she loved her father.

“What are you talking about?” I tried to lighten the conversation. “He is agile enough like a young man. He is able to take care of himself.”

She nodded. She calmed down a bit. We agreed that today we would not be cooking. We quickly ate the soup from yesterday. Ivone threw some fruit into a backpack while I collected enough grass for Clara. I had a bowl filled with water to the brim. We could go now. We went on the familiar path. I went this way for the fourth time. The trail was wide enough. It was used by forest animals as well. We were walking with Ivone side by side, holding hands. The forest was rustling reassuringly, the sun was shining from the west and the clouds gradually converged. A decent storm was coming. Nevermind, by the time it started, we would be at Ivone’s parents’ house.

Suddenly I became aware. A strange feeling engulfed me. This place looked gloomy. Immediately I found out why. Nearby on the ground laid a pile of bones and skin. The leather had been in a considerable stage of decline and many of the bones were scattered around. I felt distant sweetish odor of decomposing carrion.

I reached for the belt and pulled out the axe. I briefly looked at Ivone, she was holding a long dagger in her hand. Carefully, we approached the remains. Suddenly she stopped in shock and convulsively she gripped my hand. Next to the carrion laid a knife. I knew it. Tork’s dagger. A little further we discovered his bow and axe. It was serious. It was clear to me that he would’ve

never given them up willingly. In this world, guns represented the boundary between life and death.

Something had to happen here. But what? Ivone was in shock, she liked her father. Also, I began to worry. Worry about that hard, but loving man. I owed him my life and I loved his daughter as well. But I had to maintain my courage, it was impossible to do anything here anymore.

„Come on, there is no point of staying here. If something happened, it had to happen a long time ago. Let's go to your father's house, we might hear a bit more! "

I do not know whether I wanted to encourage her more, or myself. I hugged her reassuringly.

"That will be the best that we can do at this moment."

"Yes, you're right," she agreed.

We picked up the weapons and quickly stepped forward. We went quietly and without words. We were worried.

-Tork, Tork, please, be alright. There must be another explanation. How come that something bad happened to him! - I was talking to myself.

We approached the house. Tension grew. Ivone became pale. We walked out from behind the trees.

Tork was chopping the wood in front of the house. A huge stone fell off my heart. Daughter unhesitatingly ran to her father. She threw herself into his arms. He hugged her strongly and stroked her hair. I walked over to them.

"Tork, you old bear, I am really glad to see you. I was really worried about you," I said in greeting.

Off my shoulder I took off his bow and from my backpack I took out the rest of his things. He released Ivone, whose tears of relief streamed down her cheeks. Then he approached me. I stretched my hand toward him, he squeezed it tightly and hugged me.

"Peter. I am happy to see you as well. I wanted to visit you, lovebirds, a long time ago. But I'm weak. At least, I have been practicing with an axe here. "

He smiled.

"What has happened?" I asked directly. "You left your weapons in the woods. You would not do that, no matter what."

He cut his axe into the stump. Lovingly he gathered his lost weapons. He would clean them later. Else welcomed us warmly just like her husband. We sat around the table. Tork told us what happened after he left our house. I was a little bit surprised that he had been attacked by a wolf unexpectedly. Wolves usually avoid people. He had to have a reason.

Then Else continued. She told us, how he came home, how she treated him and looked after him. Then the talk turned to us. Ivone's parents wanted to know everything about us.

"How do you like living there?" she wondered.

Ivone talked about the new latrine and how it worked. It provoked embarrassing smiles. When she started talking about Clara, Tork shook his head in amusement. He asked me straight.

"Peter, why are you doing it? There is enough animals in the forests. You are a smart hunter, don't tell me that you cannot feed both of you!"

"Oh, please," I resisted, "I have my reasons."

I explained my intentions to him. To rear the rabbits was very simple. I also asked him to help me. I needed a male rabbit, he had to be from different blood. For later mating. Another thing I wanted was to help with the construction of economic parts. It was longer-term work and I did not have enough experience with it. He nodded solemnly when I outlined my plans.

"I do not understand why you need such a large building. You would have to breed at least a hundred of those rabbit monsters!" he exclaimed wonderingly.

He stood up in surprise. Ivone and her mother talked about their own affairs, they did not pay attention to us.

"The rabbits are only the beginning," I replied. "I have bigger plans after that. I want to grow crops."

This time he stared at me with his mouth wide open. The women went quiet as well. It surprised everyone, especially my Ivone. I had not told her about my other plans yet.

"No one has tried that yet. Secrets to grain cultivation are only known by the merchants from the south and they watch over it very anxiously. Then, the Teacher certainly knows how to, but yet he does not grow grain."

"Im sure he has his reasons," I did not give up. "I am no farmer either. I still have a lot to learn."

"Where would you like to grow it?" he asked me as if he were determined to dissuade me from this intention. "What about the forest animals? Will they not destroy the crops?"

I thought about it. I had to persuade him, without him I wouldn't be able to do it.

"That's just it. We would have to burn a piece of the forest and fence it. And of course, cultivate the land. This will require a lot of work, but I have no doubt we will succeed."

Now I would have to pull my last trick out of my sleeve.

"We will allocate the profit." I blurted out desperately.

His face brightened. He nodded. Only now I realized he got me. He, who was the Teacher's most gifted pupil, had to be interested. He was an astute businessman. He left me unsure until

I offered him a decent commission. He was not afraid of the work, I was sure of that. However, this job would take up a lot of time, that was why he wouldn't have a lot of time to hunt. This way I would be able to compensate him with grain.

"How much grain do you think we will be able to grow?" He asked.

I thought for a moment, I didn't want to exaggerate with the numbers, but I wanted to keep him motivated.

"The first harvest we will need to replant. Then, I estimate to twenty, twenty-five pitchers."

I took his breath away. He was not expecting that, even the women were stunned. They finished up their debate and started listening carefully. It was unimaginable. The merchants would've demanded a lot of goods for such amount.

"Are you serious?" he asked. "Well, let's start now." I infected him with my excitement.

"Wait, wait!" I stopped him, "It's not that simple. It is necessary to burn the forest and cultivate at least a quarter of a hectare of land. That should be enough. "

"What, what is a hectare?" Asked Else.

"Oh. Well it is about one hundred and twenty times a hundred and twenty steps." I taught her. "But that is not the main problem. Cultivating the soil is too heavy, it cannot be done just by the two of us."

"So how then?"

Everyone was kinda lost. I did not want to keep stretching the situation. I took a deep breath and spoke.

"We have to catch and tame wild bison." I murmured quickly.

Tork opened his mouth and closed it again. He was definitely not expecting this. I did not even look at Ivone. I had not told her any of this yet, first I had to see what her father would say. Without his help, this job would not even be able to start. Tork did not speak for a moment.

"You must be going mad! I have never heard anything so crazy! To catch and tame a wild bison! Do you think it's a rabbit?" he cried indignant.

Else with Ivone stayed quiet. This was a man's matter, we had to talk it out between the two of us. I had to convince him at all costs.

"How are you thinking of doing this?" he asked finally.

"Actually, I was hoping you can help me with this. You can surely come up with something. "

"Oh yes!" he laughed sarcastically. "One idea comes to mind. I will walk up to a wild bison, wish him a good day. Then ask him to come with me to serve me."